

Boys in Care. Strengthening Boys to Pursue Care Occupations

Italian Country Report

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Boys in Care Country Report Italy by

**Istituto
degli
Innocenti**



* This report is the result of the collaboration of the respective authors, however with regards to the allocation of the various sections we specify as follows:

The following chapters are by Irene Biemmi: within chapter I, paragraphs 1.1.2 Feminization of the teaching profession; 1.1.3 Sexism and reproduction of gender stereotypes in textbooks; 1.3 The education and vocational guidance system and chapter 2.

The following chapters are by Erika Bernacchi: Introduction; within chapter I, 1.1.1. Data about school and Universities enrolment; 1.2 Gender segregation in the labour market; 1.4 Specific initiatives aimed at targeting gender segregation in education and career; 1.5 National studies on masculinities and men's role in care work.

The conclusions were written jointly.

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I. National insights on caring occupations and gender

1. Introduction

European data show that education career paths are gender segregated with a tendency for girls and boys to follow traditional paths. Boys are more likely to pursue a career in scientific-technical fields, while girls concentrate in humanities and are more prone to choose occupation in the education or care sectors. A 2010 report by the European Commission based on a research promoted by the Eurydice network (2010a) shows how gender inequality in education is still an issue in all European countries - in more or less evident forms. According to this study most high school and university male and female students continue to choose paths and careers that reflect traditional gender roles - albeit with significant differences between the various countries. Women represent the majority of students and graduates in almost all countries and are particularly present in the areas of education, health, welfare, human studies and arts; men are more present in engineering, manufacturing and construction. According to the Eurostat Education statistics, the proportion of male graduates of tertiary education in 2012 in the field of engineering, manufacturing and construction was 73.1% in the European Union. On the other hand, the proportion of male graduates in the same year in the field of teacher training and education science was 20.5%. (Data source: Eurostat, Education statistics).

Although some variation is present within Europe and although there is an increasing activation of measures aimed at attracting girls in the study of the STEM (Science, Technology, Economics and Maths) subjects, the horizontal segregation in education still leads to a rather pronounced horizontal segregation in occupation. Italy is no exception to this picture as we will see in greater detail in the following sections. Equal opportunities policies have addressed gender segregation in education and employment almost exclusively from a women's point of view through a number of measures aimed at attracting more girls in the study of STEM subjects and more women in male dominated jobs. In particular in the education field, following the creation of the first International Day for Women and Girls in Science through a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations of 11 February 2016, the Italian Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Italian Department for Equal Opportunities, established the 'STEM Month — Women want to count'¹, which is a set of dedicated initiatives to combat gender stereotypes and discrimination in schools and actively promote the involvement of girls in the study of scientific subject.

¹<http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/cultura-scientifica-e-stereotipi-di-genere/il-mese-delle-stem-le-studentesse-vogliono-contare/>

On the contrary, we have not been able to identify measures targeted at boys to reduce gender-based segregation and to encourage boys into non-traditional education and careers. Such a finding is in line with the situation of the majority of European countries (Scambor et. al, 2013). This aspect is also acknowledged by the EU Parliament that in its resolution on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU (2012/2116 of 12 March 2013) stresses that “although many European countries do include a gender dimension in their career guidance, this is normally aimed at girls to encourage them to choose careers in technology or science, and there are no initiatives to encourage boys to consider careers in education, health or the humanities”. On this basis the European Parliament “stresses the importance of also including boys in the gender mainstreaming process and therefore urges the teaching of specifically-designed exercises to raise their awareness of stereotypes”.

1.1 Gender segregation in the education system

1.1.1. Data about school and Universities enrollment

In Italy gender segregation emerges clearly in secondary education especially in the schools where the subjects of study are traditionally gendered. For instance, girls constitute the overwhelming majority of students in human sciences high schools (89,1%), a typology of school which prepares for teaching and care professions that emerge, with no surprise, among the most feminized professions (see table 1). Girls are also the majority in other humanistic fields such as high school for music and dancing arts (opt. coreutic arts (91.3%), high school for foreign languages (80.1%), Classical high school² (69.8%), European/international high school (68.8%), High school for arts (69.7%). It must be noted however that not all technical fields of education are male dominated. For instance, in technical institutes with opt. in economics girls represent 55.3%, a percentage which however decreases to 16.3% for the same institutes with opt. technology. In professional institutes girls are almost the same percentage as boys in the service sector, which is again among the most feminized professions (see table 1), whereas in professional institutes with industry and craft sector, a traditionally male dominated occupation sector, their percentage decreases to 25.3.

² Classical high school refers to a high school where ancient languages and culture is taught.

Table 1. Percentage distribution by gender of students enrolled to the 1st year of secondary school - 2016-2017

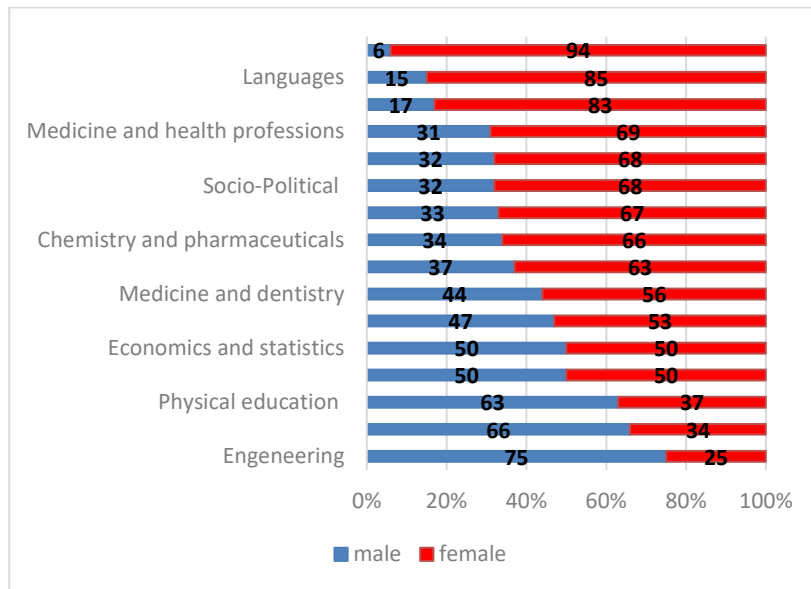
School typologies	Male	Female	Total
Classical high school	30.2	69.8	100
High school for foreign languages	19.9	80.1	100
Scientific High School	51.8	48.2	100
Scientific High School - opt. Applied sciences	68.8	31.2	100
Scientific High School – Sports	71.1	28.9	100
Human Sciences High School	10.9	89.1	100
Human Sciences High School - opt. Socio-economics	26.7	73.3	100
High school for music and coreutic arts - opt Music	48.6	51.4	100
High school for music and coreutic arts - opt. Coreutic arts	8.7	91.3	100
High shool for Arts	30.3	69.7	100
European/international High School	31.2	68.8	100
Total High School	39.3	60.7	100
Technical institute - opt. economics	44.7	55.3	100
Technical institute - opt. Technology	83.7	16.3	100
Total technical institutes	69.1	30.9	100
Professional institute- Industry and crafts sector	74.7	25.3	100
Professional institute- services sector	50.9	49.1	100
Professional Institutes - complementary sussidiarity	56.8	43.2	100
Total professional institutes	56.0	44.0	100
Total enrolled	51.3	48.7	100

Source: Ministry of Education

http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2016/FOCUS_iscrizioni_2016-2017.pdf

Data about **tertiary education** also confirm a strong gender segregation. Women constitute the vast majority of graduate in the subjects of teaching (94%), linguistics (85%), psychology (83%), health professions (69%) and literature (69%); conversely, they are a minority of graduates in the sectors of engineering (25%), sciences (34%) and of physical education (37%) (figure 1).

Figure 1. Graduates by gender and subject (%)



Source: Almalaurea

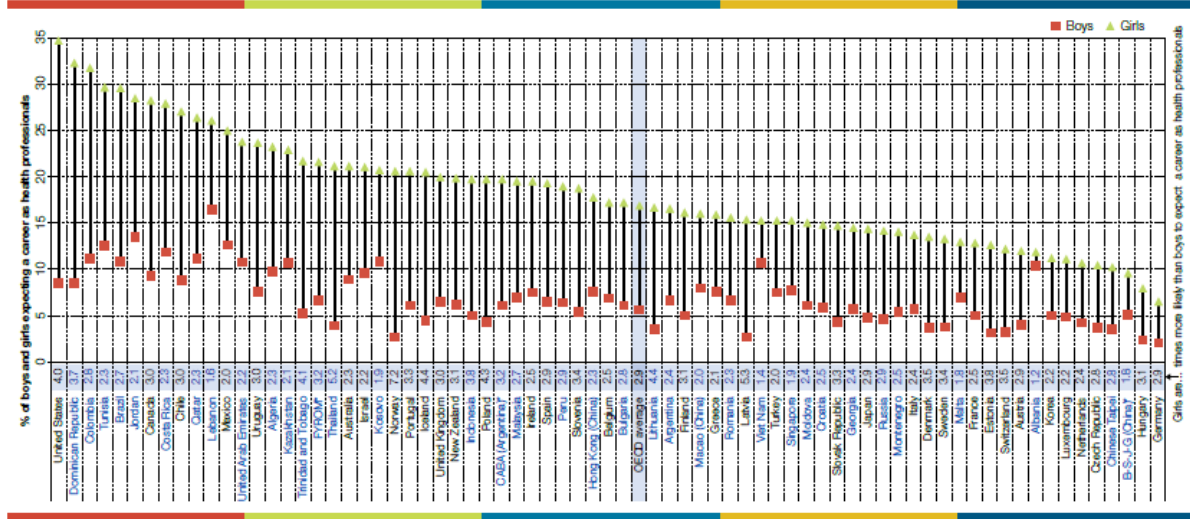
This data is in line with those included in the European study on the role of men (Scambor et al., 2013) which seems to confirm a trend. For instance, in 2009 in Italy the percentage of boys choosing studies in health and welfare sectors was of 34.2, i.e. almost half the percentage of boys choosing to study engineering, manufacturing and construction, of 70% (Scambor et al., 2013: 17). The percentage of boys enrolling in the education field in Italy is even lower as it scores only 12.2%. It is also worthwhile noting that for both sectors - education and health/welfare - the percentages have decreased since 2000, going respectively from 17.4 to 12.2 and from 38.7 to 34.2 (Scambor et al., 2013: 182). According to the most recent data the presence of boys in education (6%) and in health professions (31%) has further decreased.

The OECD /PISA³ data shows that in 2015 in Italy **only ca. 5.9% of the boys plan a career as doctors and nurses**, versus a ca. 13% of the girls (OECD average is 5.9% v. 17.4%), hence girls are 2.4 times more likely to engage in a career in these fields (versus the OECD average of 2.9) (figure 2). On the other hand around 12.3% of the boys plan a career in engineering or science, versus only a ca. 5.4% of the girls (more or less in line with OECD average which is 12.2% v. 5.3%), hence boys are 2.2 times more likely than girls to expect a career in this in these fields (versus a OECD 2.4 average) (figure 3).

³<http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/download/76e7442c-en.pdf?expires=1494424253&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=48B2B6ED6BA1EC438151628AA4667BDC>

Figure 2. “Doctors and nurses are from Venus”, OECD data

Doctors and nurses are from Venus



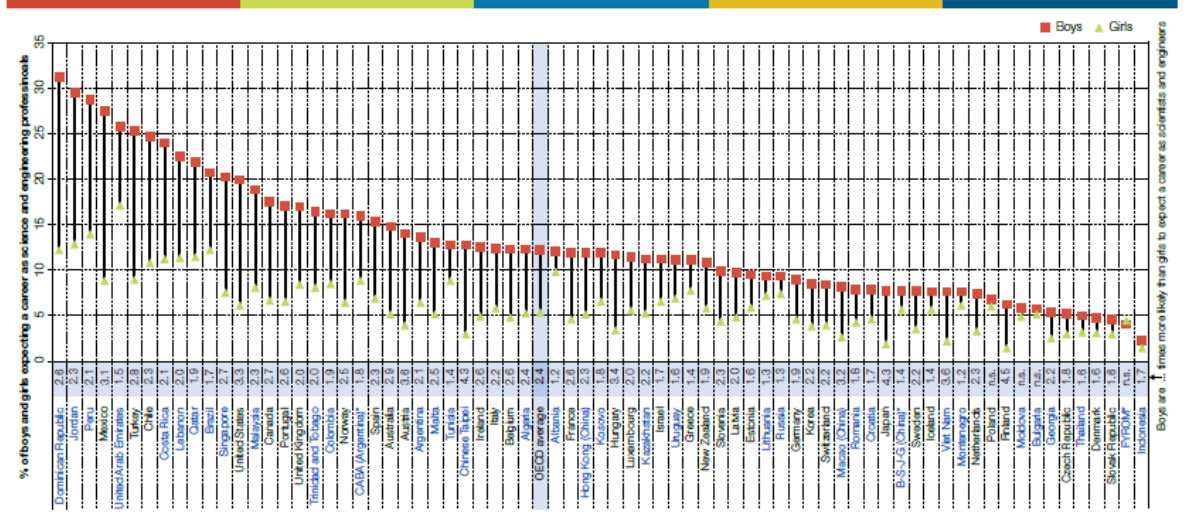
*B-S-J-G (China) refers to the four PISA-participating municipalities/provinces in China: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Guangdong; CABA refers to Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina; FYROM refers to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Note: The increased likelihood (relative risk) of girls expecting a career as health professionals is indicated next to the country/economy name; "n.s." indicates a relative risk that is not significantly different from 1 (equal likelihood).

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of girls expecting a career as health professionals.
Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Tables I.3.11b.
Statlink: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933433183>

Figure 3. “Engineers and scientists are from Mars (for now)”, OECD data

Engineers and scientists are from Mars (for now)



*B-S-J-G (China) refers to the four PISA-participating municipalities/provinces in China: Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Guangdong; CABA refers to Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina; FYROM refers to the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Note: The increased likelihood (relative risk) of boys expecting a career as science and engineering professionals is indicated next to the country/economy name; "n.s." indicates a relative risk that is not significantly different from 1 (equal likelihood).

Countries and economies are ranked in descending order of the percentage of boys expecting a career as science and engineering professionals.
Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Database, Tables I.3.11a.
Statlink: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933433183>

1.1.2 Feminization of the teaching profession

Another aspect which is worth considering when addressing the issue of gender segregation in education is that the feminization of the teaching profession has not given rise to a situation in which gender stereotypes in the study of the different subjects are addressed and contrasted. On the contrary, various studies, beginning in the 1970s (Belotti, 1973; Ulivieri, 1996), exposed the complicity of female teachers in the uncritical perpetuation of a sexist and conservative culture, that – paradoxically – penalized their own gender.

The feminization of the teaching profession started in Italy in the second half of the 19th century through a specific law of 1859 which introduces the training of female teachers in primary schools. Such a measure is functional to the project of the newly constituted Italian state (1860) in which there is a need to provide for elementary teaching through limited financial resources. This is why the teaching profession for elementary schools is open to women who constitute a reserve of cheap labour and who often have to face a cultural hostility towards this new role. In the 20th century women gain an increasing larger role in the teaching profession, although not in a linear way. For instance during the Fascist period some policies are enforced aimed at preventing women from becoming teaching and even limiting education for girls. After the second world war and in particular starting from 1962 with the institution of the “middle school” (for children aged 11-14 years) the phenomenon of the feminization of school resumes and increases until today. Women become the majority of teachers not only in primary schools, but also secondary.

However this feminization of the teaching profession has not lead to addressing the issue of gender stereotypes in school teaching. The kind of knowledge that is transmitted in schools pretends to be neutral, while in fact it is often a male view world as there has not been a revision of the curriculum through a gender approach. As it will be better explained in the second part of the report, this is also evident in how school books portray women/girls and men/boys. Thus Biemmi (2009) concludes that in Italian schools there are two contradictory curricula. A first explicit and official curriculum which is identical for boys and girls, thus promoting the idea of equal opportunities and a second hidden curriculum which is full of implicit messages (such as the depiction of women/girls and men/boys in school texts) which do not support the same message of the official curriculum, but promote the idea of traditional stereotypical gender roles. Biemmi (2009) concludes that the Italian school offers only an “illusion of parity” as boys and girls attend the same schools up to a certain degree, while at some point they take different trajectories which are still deeply influenced by social and family expectations as well as by the hidden school curriculum.

1.1.3 Sexism and reproduction of gender stereotypes in textbooks

Linked to the previous point is the issue of the reproduction of gender stereotyped images and language in the textbooks. A number of initiatives have been fostered on this subject by Equal Opportunities bodies in Italy, however with limited as results as it will be shown in the analysis of the chosen material. In the '80s a project on linguistic sexism was carried out which led to the drafting of *Recommendations for a non sexist use of the Italian language* by Sabatini (1987). In her analysis, Sabatini focuses on the use of the so-called «unmarked masculine» which consists of a dual function of the male gender that can refer to either male or both genders (while the female tends to be more marked in the sense that its use is restricted to the female). In the case of the Italian language, like many other languages with grammatical gender, the principle of the unlabeled masculine spreads through the entire language, since «any masculine noun (singular or plural) referred to a person may also represent the two sexes or only male: “Italians” can be either “Italian men” or “men and women”» (Sabatini, 1987: 25). There follows a supremacy and universality of men in language that contrasts with the bias and marginalization of women. On this matter, Sabatini states that a false neutrality of the masculine exists, which, although claimed to be universal, belongs solely to the «male» (marked).

In 1986, a second major study was published, *Male and female images in elementary school texts*, in which the author, Rossana Pace, summarized the results of research into reading books and subsidiaries in elementary schools. The hypothesis that motivated this research is that school textbooks should at least offer a realistic image of society and suggest a variety of models to boys and girls, situations to draw from, in order to build a coherent image of the self and the outside world so as to prepare them for change, social mobility and transformation of roles. The conclusion she reached was quite different:

Besides great efforts to modernize content and images, there is a prevailing tendency to immobility, which is lack of realism: in the representation of the world of work, where trades are often those of the past, slowly disappearing; in language, which is often outdated, and most importantly, in the allocation of roles and tasks, with women relegated to the traditional positions of busy housewives and at times – being the ultimate concession – of charity workers, and assigned to the role of mothers, according to obsolete cliché (Pace, 1986: 11, our translation).

We will see in two recent studies of primary schools textbooks that the situation has not changed in a significant way in relation to gender stereotypes.

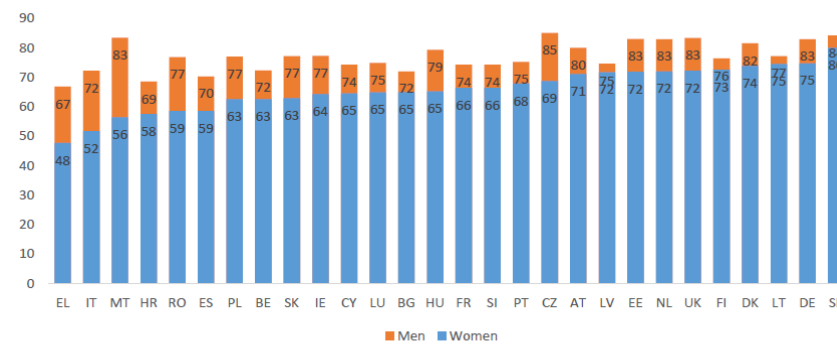
It was not until the end of '90s that this issue was the focus of attention of European project called “Polite” aimed at promoting cultural reflection in teaching and publishing, and rethinking textbooks so that men and women, protagonists of culture, history, politics and science, would appear in the textbooks without

gender discrimination. The two editions have produced important documents, including a *Code of practice for editors* aimed at providing some guidelines to ensure that the gender perspective becomes a guiding criterion in the writing of textbooks. The Code is not intended as a legal guideline or censorship; on the contrary, it relies on the innovative skill of publishers, authors and writers, and assigns them the task of creating new texts and teaching tools according to their own freedom and culture. The second edition of Polite was structured over two years (1999/2000 and 2000/2001) and its most important products were two Handbooks (Serravalle Porzio, Ed., 2000; Id., 2001) – complementary to the Code of practice – which propose a review of the various disciplines (philosophy, literature, history, maths, science, language, economy) from a gender perspective, in an attempt to give visibility to important contributions from women. The initial premise is to overcome the supposed neutrality of knowledge that has come to overshadow the two genders, male and female.

1.2 Gender segregation in the labour market

In line with data on gender segregation in education, data on participation in the labour market confirms a gender segregation trend as well as a smaller employment rate for women. Italy has one of the lowest women’s participation in labour market in Europe (52%, versus 72% of men), as indicated by 2016 Eurostat data. (figure 4)

Figure 4. Women’s and men’s employment rate, per Member States, people aged 20-64, 2016q3



Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey

Data on men in **professional care work**⁴ shows that in Italy the share of men among care workers was in 2000 among the highest rates (with Spain, Greece, Luxembourg and Austria) (20.6%). However, this data almost halved during nine years, leading to a rate of **12% in 2009** (Scambor et al, 2013: 60, 196).

⁴ Professional care work includes nursing and midwifery professionals, primary and preprimary education teaching professionals, special education teaching professionals, nursing and midwifery associate professionals, primary

Table 2. Share of men among 'care workers' by country, in %, 2000 and 2009

	Percentage of male „care workers“		
	2000	2009	Change 2000-2009
Austria	17.2	14.6	-2.6
Belgium	10.8	11.0	0.2
Cyprus	11.6	12.7	1.1
Czech Republic	11.7	11.0	-0.7
Germany	14.1	12.4	-1.7
Denmark	17.1	17.2	0.1
Spain	22.1	16.0	-6.1
Finland	7.5	8.8	1.3
France	15.5	17.6	2.1
Greece	22.3	21.8	-0.5
Hungary	12.4	13.4	1.0
Ireland	14.1	12.2	-1.9
Island	7.7	11.5	3.8
Italy	20.6	12.0	-8.6
Luxembourg	22.2	21.5	-0.7
Latvia	6.5	7.6	1.1
Netherlands	12.8	11.5	-1.3
Norway	15.6	15.3	-0.3
Portugal	12.3	9.1	-3.2
Romania	n.d.	12.7	
Sweden	11.9	13.7	1.8
Slovakia	11.6	9.6	-2.0
UK	10.6	14.1	3.5

Source: Eurostat, Labour Force Survey, LFS 2000 Q4 (with the following exceptions: Cyprus, Iceland, Luxembourg, Sweden 2000 Q2, Germany 2002 Q2 and France 2000 Q1) and 2009 Q4; „care workers“ calculated from the following occupations and the respective ISCO-88 3-digit-numbers: Nursing and midwifery professionals (223), primary and pre-primary education teaching professionals (233), special education teaching professionals (234), nursing and midwifery associate professionals (323), primary education teaching associate professionals (331), pre-primary education teaching associate professionals (332), special education teaching associate professionals (333), other teaching associate professionals (334), social work associate professionals (346), personal care and related workers (513); own calculations.

Source: The Study of the Role of Men in Gender Equality (Scambor et al, 2013)

Table 3. Occupations with high female presence (2012)

	% women on the total
Teachers of primary, pre-primary schools and assimilated professions	97.3 %
Qualified professions in services to people and assimilated services*	92.5%
Non qualified personnel for domestic services	89.1%
Qualified professions in health and social services	82.5%
Other specific professions in education and training	75.6%
Technicians of social services**	74.3%
Health technicians***	70.7%
Teachers of secondary and post-secondary schools and assimilated professions	66.9%

Source: Rapporto sul mercato del lavoro 2012-2013, Consiglio nazionale economia e lavoro (Report on the labour market 2012-2013, Economics and Labour National Committee), p. 132

education teaching associate professionals, pre-primary education teaching associate professionals, special education teaching associate professionals, other teaching associate professionals, social work associate professionals, personal care and related workers

Box 1. Definition of professions by Istat⁵

***Qualified professions in services to people and assimilated services**

The professions included in this class provide care services to people and domestic support to families, as well as domestic support and services to people who need help in institutions.

****Technicians of social services**

The professions included in this class guide people and families in finding solutions to social and integration problems. They take care of the safety of people and companies in a private way. They take care of the well-being and aesthetic care of the body. They dedicate themselves to the prayer and diffusion of the religious teachings they profess.

*****Health technicians**

The professions included in this class plan manage and evaluate nursing care interventions, ensure the correct application of diagnostic and therapeutic prescriptions, assist mothers and newborns, perform diagnostic procedures, prepare prostheses, orient health-care regimes, verify and monitor the application of the rules on health safety in public and work areas, practice treatments derived from traditional medicine.

Consistently, OECD data⁶ indicates that in Italy men represent only:

Table 4. OECD data about the male percentage of professions

0.7% of the teaching staff in pre-primary school

3.6% in primary school

22% in secondary school of first level

34.2% of second level.

This is certainly due to two factors: firstly, the higher salary and career perspectives and, secondly, the more cognitive and less caring contents, the higher the education grade is. As regards the second factor, gender stereotypes surely play a role, while the first factor seems to confirm the 2010 data on vertical segregation in Italy, that proves to belong the EU countries with the highest rate (Scambor et al, 2013: 198, 199).

⁵ The document about the classification of professions is available in Italian at the webpage: www.istat.it/it/files/2013/07/la_classificazione_delle_professioni.pdf

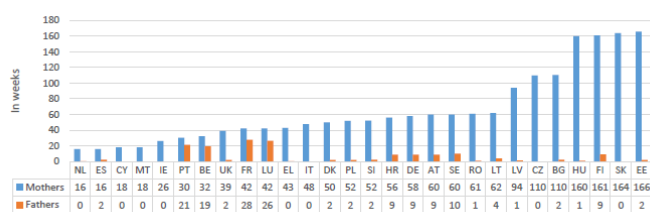
⁶ OECD Report "Education at a Glance 2017 OECD Indicators", page 400

Concerning the issue of men’s and women’s share of domestic unpaid work, Italy ranks in a medium position with women doing 24hours per week of unpaid work and men doing 9 hours (confronted with a European average of 22 hours for women and 10 hours for men). The disproportion between men and women is however striking (Eurofound, 2015).

Concerning work-life balance policies, the Italian situation also emerges as rather critical both in relation to availability of early childhood education and care services and concerning fathers’ share of parental leave. Notwithstanding a number of national and local measures aimed at raising the number of early childhood education and care services and at improving their quality, Italy has not yet reached the Barcelona target of 33% of services for children under the age of 3 (which in 2014 was reached only by 10 countries), as it reached 22,8% in 2015 (Istituto degli Innocenti, 2015). In 2016 a country specific recommendation related to female labour market participation was addressed by the EU to 10 countries including Italy, which were invited to improve the provision of quality, affordable full time childcare, access to long term care and to remove obstacles and disincentives to economic independence. The project led by the Italian Department for Equal Opportunities carried out a pilot to test new working arrangements in a large Italian company. It will identify the impact of the new arrangements on employees’ well-being and on the company’s performance, before launching a special awareness campaign on encouraging the use of parental leave by working fathers and other forms of flexible working arrangements for male workers (European Commission, 2017: 13).

Concerning parental leaves, whereas Istat data states that only 7% of fathers took parental leaves in the year 2014, there is no paid parental leave for fathers which is fully non transferable. As indicated by OECD data, whereas mothers have 48 weeks of paid leave, the paid leave reserved for fathers in 2016 in Italy amounts to 0 weeks. (figure 5)

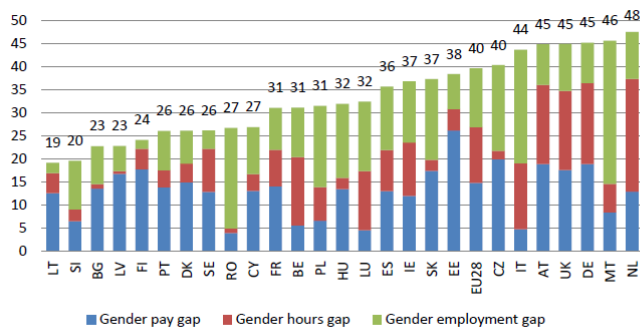
Figure 5. Length of total paid leave available to mothers and length of total paid leave reserved for fathers (in weeks), 2016



Source: OECD, Family database, 2016. Note: "Total paid leave available to mothers" refers to all weeks of paid maternity leave and all weeks of employment-protected paid parental and home care leave that can be used by the mother. This includes any weeks that are an individual entitlement or that are reserved for the mother, and those that are a sharable or family entitlement. Any weeks of parental leave that are reserved for the exclusive use of the father are excluded. "Total paid leave reserved for fathers" refers to all weeks of paid paternity leave, any weeks of paid parental or home care leave that can be used only by the father (or 'other' parent) and cannot be transferred to the mother, plus any weeks of sharable paid leave that must be taken by the father (or 'other' parent) in order for the family to qualify for "bonus" weeks of paid parental leave. Weeks are included only if they are fully non-transferable. Any entitlements that are initially given to the father but can be transferred to the mother are excluded.

Finally, also concerning gender pay gap in earnings Italy has a high rate of 44% in 2014 (as compared to a EU average of 39.8%), (figure 6). This Eurostat index indicates inequalities resulting from the gaps in pay, working hours and employment and therefore it can be considered the most comprehensive indicator of labour market inequalities between women and men. (European Commission, 2017: 25)

Figure 6. Overall gender earnings gap, and contribution of the gap in pay, working hours and employment, 2014, EU-28



Source: Eurostat, Structure of Earnings Survey (EL and HR missing)

1.3 The education and vocational guidance system

The “Guidelines for life-long orientation” issued by the Ministry of Education in 2014 refer to the activity of education orientation⁷ as an “institutional activity of schools of every typology and degree which constitutes an integral part of the school curricula and more generally of the educational process since the pre-primary school. It deals with a set of activities that aim to form and enhance the students’ abilities to know themselves, the environment they live in, cultural and socio-economic changes, and the training and education opportunities so that they can be protagonists of a personal project of life, and to participate actively, equally and responsibly in study and family life and social life”.

Based on this approach, according to some authors, it would be more correct to refer not to school guidance but to education/training guidance, suggesting that such a guidance should not be activated only in the moments of passage (from one school to another) but should be conceived as a larger, more complex

⁷ The following are some texts about the system of school guidance and vocational training in Italy: F. MAROSTICA (2011), *Lo sguardo di Venere. Orientamento formativo o Didattica orientativa/orientante per la costruzione di competenze orientative di base*, Bologna, Labanti e Nanni; N. DE LUIGI e F. SANTANGELO, *Esperienza scolastica, senso di appartenenza e aspettative future tra gli studenti di scuola media*, in CUCONATO M. (ed.) (2014), *Il tempo delle medie. Esperienze scolastiche e transizioni generazionali*, Roma, Carocci; Lo Presti, F. (2009), *Educare alle scelte. L’orientamento formativo per la costruzione di identità critiche*, Roma, Carocci.

and more continuous process. A similar approach to lifelong learning in the education and training system is regarded as key in European policy. For instance the “Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of 21 November 2008 on better integrating lifelong guidance into lifelong learning strategies” defines this approach as “a continuous process that enables citizens at any age and at any point in their lives to identify their capacities, competences and interests, to make educational, training and occupational decisions and to manage their individual life paths in learning, work and other settings in which those capacities and competences are learned and/or used.”

In this perspective, the 2014 “Guidelines for lifelong orientation”⁸, aim to contribute to the effort to define a consistent education system focused on the person and his/her needs, aiming to prevent and combat youth social distress and to promote full and active employability, social inclusion and intercultural dialogue. As a starting point the Guidelines set “the centrality of the education system as a whole, which is the invaluable place in which every young boy and girl can acquire and strengthen those basic and transversal skills needed to develop his / her own identity, autonomy, decision and plans. One can hardly tell that further developments and transitions, or carrier and profession achievements, or learning, may be successful without this baseline of competences”. In this context a central role in the system of education guidance and vocational training is acknowledged to the school, as it is entrusted the task of fostering the basic orientation skills and the key citizenship skills, and that of accompanying activities and consultancy, in order to help the young people “to give value to what has been learnt at school, to build progressively their life experience, and to make the right choices.” Moreover, the Guidelines specify how external professionals need to be involved in the school in some cases, bringing in special competences which are requested to support the young people in the transition between school and work, for a full social and labour inclusion.

It is worth to note that no mention of gender issues is made in Guidelines, nor of the need to prepare an attitude to counteract the inequalities intrinsic in the school guidance and vocational training system which push boys and girls to different school paths and – later – careers. If we compare the principles set in the 2014 Guidelines with the current school guidance system, we may observe contradictions and differences, among which the most relevant is its merely information-based character (that is, offering the students lists about schools and graduate courses available in the education system), and also the fact that the school guidance service is limited in time and available only immediately before choosing the upper secondary school (at the third year of the lower secondary) or the University (at the last year of the upper secondary) without covering the whole time-span of studies.

⁸ http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/linee_guida_orientamento.pdf

Finally, if we apply a “gender-filter” to the comprehension of school guidance and vocational guidance, we can say that a reflection about the connections between gender and the education choices is still lacking, despite the existence of a specific literature on this issue.⁹

1.4 Specific initiatives aimed at targeting gender segregation in education and career

In the last years there has been an increasing attention to measures aimed at encouraging a larger presence of girls in male dominated fields of study and work sectors. As already acknowledged, the Ministry of Education, University and Research in collaboration with the Department for Equal Opportunities has promoted a number of measures to increase the presence of girls in the study of STEM subjects for instance through the “STEM month”.¹⁰ In the year 2016, fifty schools have adhered to this initiative together with some private companies. These initiatives are aimed not only at secondary schools but start from primary schools in order to create an early awareness about the topic. They include the use and creation of videos, competitions, multimedia material. In some cases they aim of involving girls in the knowledge and study of the STEM subjects, while in others they propose activities that reflect on the reasons why girls are traditionally excluded from some subjects. They often provide for texts, books, videos about women’s contribution to scientific subject which are often neglected in the school curriculum.

On the contrary, measures targeted at boys/men to reduce gender-based segregation and to encourage boys/men into non-traditional jobs are rare (Bettio and Verashchagina, 2009). Therefore, the experience realized in the last years in the promotion of STEM for girls could represent a valuable model or starting point in order to promote similar experiences addressed to boys in the area of care.

⁹ E. Truffelli e A. Spallacci, *Ragazze e ragazzi a scuola: rendimento, vissuti, ruoli*, in Leonelli S., Selmi G. (ed.), *Genere, corpi e televisione. Sguardi di adolescenti*, Pisa, ETS, 2013; A. M. Venera, *La valorizzazione delle differenze di genere nell’azione orientativa*, in EAD. (ed.), *Genere, educazione e processi formativi. Riflessioni e tracce operative*, Parma, Edizioni Junior, 2014; N. De Luigi, *Adolescenti e scelte scolastiche: risultati, preferenze e aspettative*, in N. De Luigi e L. Gobbi (ed.), *Giovani e genere. L’immaginario degli studenti sammarinesi*, Carocci, Roma, 2010; Mapelli Barbara, Bozzi Tarizzo Gisella, De Marchi Diana (2001), *Orientamento e identità di genere. Crescere donne e uomini*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia; Biemmi I. e Leonelli S. (2016), *Gabbie di genere. retaggi sessisti e scelte formative*, Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino.

¹⁰ At this link it is possible to find a description of the activities undertaken by some schools in the “STEM month” <http://www.pariopportunita.gov.it/cultura-scientifica-e-stereotipi-di-genere/il-mese-delle-stem-le-studentesse-vogliono-contare/>

1.5 National studies on masculinities and men's role in care work

There is a growing body of academic literature on masculinities which addresses the changing role of men in the Italian society in the last decades. They mainly address issues related to men's roles and identities, fatherhood, work, health, violence, sexuality (Bellassai, 2003, 2011; Ciccone, 2009, 2012; Corbisiero and Monaco, 2017; Deriu, 2004; Gasparrini 2016; Nardini, 2016; Rinaldi and Cappotto, 2011, Stagi 2010). They also address the issue of men in education (Bellassai, 2010, Deiana e Greco, 2012; Mappelli e Ulivieri, 2012). However, academic studies on men who work in non-traditional occupations which focus on the care dimension are rare. Also the recent volume of the journal *AG-About Gender* (Vol 6, N° 11 (2017))¹¹ dedicated to male studies addressed issues while emphasizing the current contradictory trends related to the social construction of masculinity, it refers to the growing importance of care for a part of men mostly in relation to fatherhood or family tasks more generally. No specific attention is devoted to the topic of men engaging in care as work. There is some literature on the issue of men who work as caregivers (especially elderly care) which focuses on the contribution of migrant men (Ambrosini and Beccalli 2009; Scrinzi and Gallo, 2016). This comes as no surprise considering the prevalent role that migrant workers, mainly women but also men, have in the sector of domestic and care work in Italy and other European and Western countries.

Other studies (Ruspini, 2011) suggest that men who do not work (househusbands, stay-at-home fathers) encounter discrimination, but the forms and consequences of this discrimination may be very different: discrimination and prejudice facing men in the "female professions" emanate both in the family, in the labour market and in the welfare state dimensions. Wherein society is more accepting of women working as much as men, men are stigmatized if they engage in housework and child care activities, whether by their parents, employers, or society at large.

A recent book (Biemmi and Leonelli, 2016) investigates the reasons behind atypical education and career choices by girls and boys through interviews. It emerges that while for girls the idea to attend a University course dedicated to scientific subjects originates during secondary school, for boys the idea to attend University courses devoted to education or care/health professions is a more complex journey. Such an idea is generally elaborated thanks to some volunteering experience, national civil service or summer camps. This finding would support the validity of initiatives such as the 'Boys day' in which boys can attend early childhood services, primary schools, homes for the elderly where they can experiment what an education and care work looks like.

¹¹ The journal is available at: <http://www.aboutgender.unige.it/index.php/generis/index>

II. Analysis of material for occupational orientation/vocational education

Since in Italy there are no specific initiatives aimed at tackling boys for a larger involvement in the care professions, we have decided to analyse two typologies of material that are representative of the situation in the country. In particular we present two sets of analysis of elementary school textbooks and the analysis of the material and videos which are included in the website of the Ministry of Education, Research and University for school guidance and vocational training. The analysis has been carried out taking into consideration the main elements of the 3R analysis.¹²

2.1. Analysis of primary school textbooks

2.1.1 Italian textbooks of 2000s

In this section we discuss the results of a study (Biemmi, 2010) which examined a sample of books for the fourth grade of elementary schools (children aged 9-10) by ten major publishers (De Agostini, Nicola Milano, Piccoli, Il Capitello, La Scuola, Giunti, Elmedi, Piemme, Raffaello, Fabbri), published at the beginning of the millennium. The survey was divided into two levels. The first was a quantitative analysis of 340 stories presented in the books which aimed to identify how many times, in images and texts, men and women are represented, in which role they appear and in what context. The second, qualitative level investigated in greater depth the association between masculine and feminine that emerges in the stories, through the identification of gender stereotypes and possibly alternative models to traditional, anti-stereotypical ones.

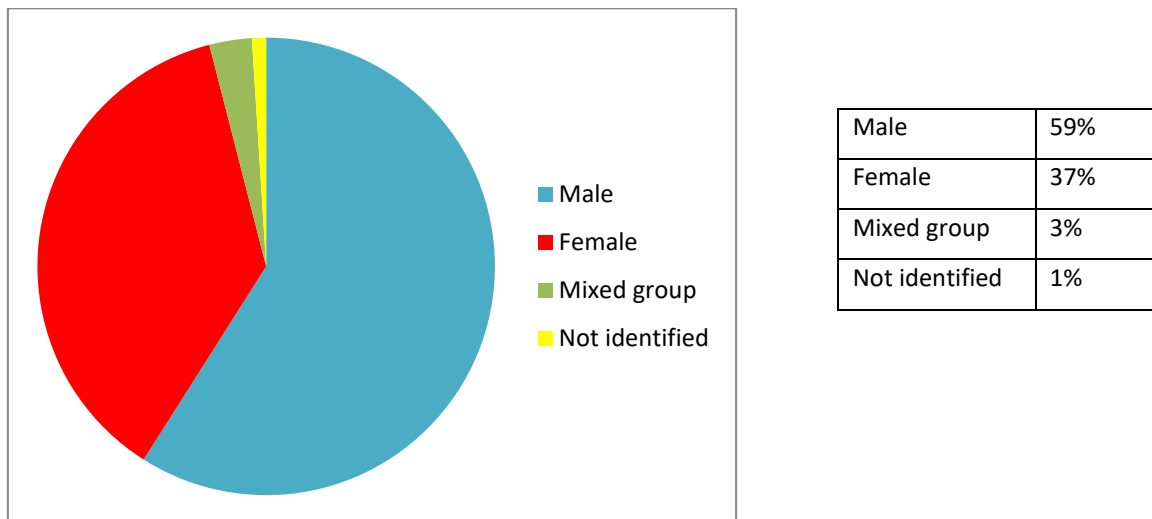
Results of quantitative analysis

One of the most widely discussed aspects of gender discrimination present in textbooks is the underrepresentation of women, that Giannini Belotti referred to as the «invisibility of women». This is a progressive eclipsing of young and adult females, giving them less space than males, and also minor roles (secondary characters of a story). The sex of the central character is crucial because the hero of the story is the focus of interest for both boys and girls readers, often through an identification process with the character belonging to their own sex. The first objective of the quantitative analysis was therefore to check the percentage of characters of both sexes; even the distribution of male and female roles between the secondary characters of the story is significant.

¹² A 3-R Analysis relates to three dimensions: a) Representation: the horizontal and vertical distribution of gender within an organization/situation; b) Resources: the gender-specific distribution of the availability of different resources and spaces; c) Realia: the dominant values and norms represented in the analysed material

From the analysis, it appears that males play a leading role in 59% of the stories while females are featured in 37% of the stories examined¹³. (figure 7) If we create a simple ratio between the two percentages ($59/37 = 1.6$), we discover that for every ten females with leading roles, there were sixteen male protagonists.

Figure 7. Gender of the protagonists of stories published in textbooks (Biemmi, 2010)



These are the overall results and it is interesting to see whether differences exist between publishers. The significant data, although there are meaningful differences, show that none of the ten books examined reaches a perfect numerical equality between males and females: in all the books there are far more male characters than female ones. There are only three cases (Fabbri, Elmedi and De Agostini) in which the proportion of the two sexes, although not perfectly equal, is however rather balanced¹⁴. Thanks to them the outstanding cases of numerical inequality, on a global average, are concealed. For example, in the books of Giunti Editors, La Scuola, Raffaello and Capitello there are twice as many male protagonists (La Scuola), or even more (Raffaello, Capitello and Giunti), than female. This means that in these texts, on average, for every girl represented there are two boys, for every woman, two men. The most outstanding case is Raffaello in which the ratio of the two genders rises to 3.3 (23 males versus 7 females): for every female there are 3 males. Piemme Editors also presents a significant difference (64% males versus 36% females), and the same goes for Nicola Milano Editors (60% males versus 36% females) and Piccoli Editors (60% versus 40%). Yet again the remaining percentage consists of mixed groups or the groups in which the sex of the protagonist is unknown. Thus, the issue of a lack of women in textbooks is confirmed: in all the texts analyzed, females are less present in leading roles than males in the stories. Young and adult females may not be wholly invisible, but they are certainly obscured by the stronger male presence.

¹³ The remaining 4% of the protagonists is made up of “mixed groups” (groups with males and females) and a small percentage (1%) when it is impossible to know the sex of the protagonist of the story.

¹⁴ Fabbri Editors presents 47% male protagonists against 44% females; Elmedi Editors 45% males against 52% females; De Agostini Editors 47% males against 49% females.

The analysis also considered the issue of how leading roles are distributed between the sexes. As the existing disparity between the sexes in leading roles is quite evident, one might suppose they intended to make up the difference in the secondary characters of the stories: young and adult women, instead of being placed in the role of the main actors in the story, could be chosen as “mates” acting as companions to the male ventures. The hypothesis of a greater female presence among the secondary characters contradicted by data: even among the supporting actors of the stories the masculine gender prevails.¹⁵ The world represented in textbooks is, therefore, populated almost exclusively by men and children. However it is now important to verify which kind of activities and professions they are performing and how the issue of care work is represented.

Male and female professions: scientists, housewives and fairies



Image 1. Male and female professions

If we examine in more detail how male and female characters are represented, we see a difference in treatment and a clear desire to create two symbolic universes of reference for boy and girl readers, divided on the basis of gender. The central point of these two universes is above all a clear definition of the professional roles “suited” to either sex. The identification of the professional roles assigned to the two sexes in educational texts is particularly important because the range of occupations attributed to men and women will have a strong impact on future career aspirations, corresponding to male or female readers of those texts. The boys will draw from the male professions just as the girls adapt their own career desires according to the list of professions for women.

First, the analysis calculated the percentage of men and women represented in a professional role: in the texts analyzed, there were 70% men and 56% women. Moreover, the analysis identified as many as fifty different professions assigned to men against fifteen professions attributed to women. The male professions are: king, knight, teacher, equerry, writer, wizard, doctor, poet, fisherman, painter, pirate,

¹⁵ Making a comparison among the protagonists, surprisingly, the results are almost identical. It was calculated that the relationship between male and female protagonists is 1.6; between male and female characters it is 1.7: for every 10 female protagonists there are 17 males represented. It is concluded that the numeric discrepancy among the characters of both genders is even (slightly) superior to that shown among the protagonists.

pageboy, cabin boy, doctor on ship, mechanic, umbrella repairer, nobleman, navigator, sculptor, pupil, scientist, pageboy, woodcutter, scholar, sheik, traveller, president of football club, prophet, upholsterer, salesman, barber, Father Christmas, artist, librarian, singer, woodman, architect, craftsman, knife-grinder, journalist, card player, sailor, geologist, farmer, commander, ship captain, crusader, train driver, explorer, tax collector. The female professions are: teacher, witch, writer, sorceress, kindly old witch, noble lady, wet nurse, painter, actress, princess, fairy, housewife, lady of the castle, librarian, fortune-teller.

It should be pointed out that the difference is not only quantitative but also qualitative: the masculine professions are much more prestigious and rewarding than female ones, in particular because they reflect material and political power which have traditionally been one of the most important sources for male privilege. This brings us back to the dual problem which still characterizes the division of labour between the sexes: besides a «horizontal division of labour» (division of work between the sexes and careers that give rise to male and female occupations), there also exists a “vertical division of labor” (unequal pay and prestige between the sexes).

Male child readers will have a wide range of job opportunities: they can dream of becoming scientists, writers, doctors, poets, journalists, engineers, explorers, architects, orchestra conductors, etc. The girls will have to settle instead for a teaching role (by far the most popular occupation among women), unless they wish to become witches, fairies and diviners (other cases frequently recurring) or happy housewives. However, it is also important to note that even for boys the professions and roles assigned pretty much refer to a traditional male imaginary where there is no space for “alternative” masculinities. For instance boys who wish to be involved in the education and care professions will find no role models in these textbooks as there are no men represented in the role of teacher, care worker, educator etc. Thus, it is clear that the texts examined do not provide “equal employment opportunities” for pupils of both sexes. The message implicitly conveyed by these books, is that there are jobs reserved for men and jobs for women and that the two categories are not at all interchangeable.

Females: sweet and patient; males: strong and adventurous

The study also provides an analysis of how the women/girls and men/boys are described in the stories thanks to an examination of adjectives used. Masculine adjectives are: safe, brave, serious, proud, honest, ambitious, threatening, thoughtful, concentrated, brute, adventurous, authoritarian, furious, generous, proud, tough, selfish, angry, righteous, superior, wise, determined, bold, free, impudent. The female gender is instead qualified by these adjectives: nasty, gossipy, jealous, vain, spoiled, flirt, arrogant, affectionate, anxious, distressed, humiliated, caring, patient, kind, tender, shy, quiet, helpful, understanding, gentle, charming, delicate, desperate, hypersensitive, sweet, innocent.

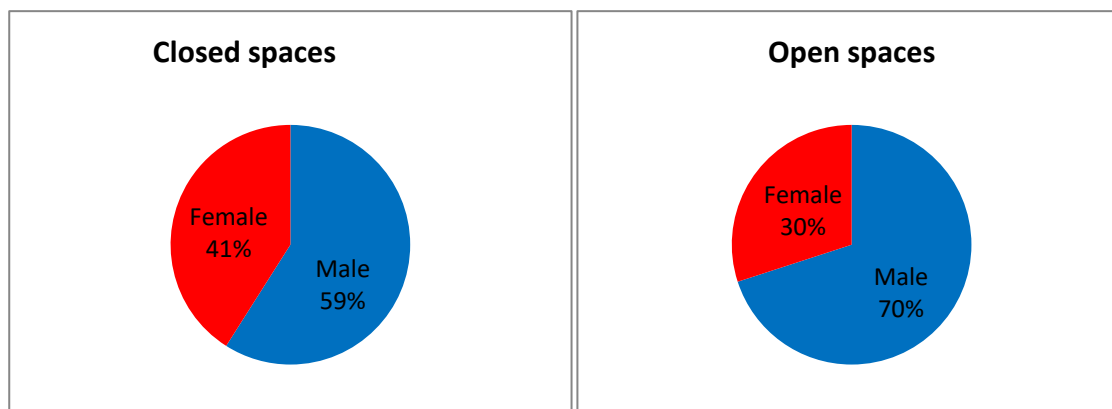
Also in this case there is a clear discrepancy between the adjectives applied to males and females. And it shows once again that the difference is, first of all, of a qualitative nature: males are qualified on the basis of the adjectives that sum up positive qualities or otherwise positively connoted in the mainstream culture (strength, courage, virtue, wisdom), while the attributes associated with females more often have a negative connotation (vanity) or denote weakness and fragility. However also in this case there is no space for alternative models of femininity and masculinity. For instance, adjectives that might be referred to a profession in the field of care (such as caring, patient, kind, helpful, understanding, gentle) are only used for female characters, thus conveying the implicit message that boys who have these characteristics are not real boys.

Spaces for men and women

A number of studies¹⁶ have shown a close relationship between the gender of the protagonist and the space in which the story takes place. In particular, the female gender is usually associated with confined spaces, while the male gender to the open spaces: the woman is relegated to a private sphere, a familiar one, while the man is projected into a public and work context. The results of this study show that if the story is set in closed spaces, in 57% of cases, the protagonist is a male and in 39% a female; instead, when the story is placed in open spaces, there is a male protagonist in 65% of cases versus 28% of female protagonists (figure 8). Thus, a first important fact to be noted is that males are “omnipresent”, more present than females in all places (both closed and open spaces). In open spaces the male presence, however, is much more pronounced: it is more than twice that of women. This means that in stories set outdoors, two out of three protagonists are male.

¹⁶ Cfr. Giani Gallino, T. (1973). Stereotipi sessuali nei libri di testo. *Scuola e città*, n. 4; Pace, R. (1986). *op. cit.*; Gianini Belotti, E., (Ed.). (1978). *op. cit.*

Figure 8. Placement of males and females in open and closed spaces



In relation to the characteristics of the spaces, the analysis shows that closed spaces for females are, in the vast majority of cases, represented by the home, classroom or school (where the girls are very much in the role of students and adult women in the role of teachers). Other «female places» mentioned in the stories: library, hair salon, beautician, dance hall, hotel, carriage. Confined spaces in which men are present often seem to be the workplace or means of transport (car, train, plane, ship). In the latter case the space is of course closed but it assumes movement, moving in the outside world. Men are then placed in faraway locations (for example: a tent in the desert, a cave, the galley of a ship, a monastery) or in places dedicated to entertainment (the maze, a room for the puppet show, the circus). Similar differences are found in closed spaces. Male spaces are many and varied (the sea, a forest, a beach, a wood, a road, a desert, the mountains, the plains, an island) while female spaces are much more limited and appear closer to the domestic context (a garden, a park, the terrace of the house). Once again men and boys are represented in a greater variety of spaces and situations than young or adult women.

Games and toys for boys and girls

The different preferences of boys and girls regarding games (Ricchiardi and Venera, 2005) are not the result of a spontaneous choice but are the natural consequence of the education imparted by parents and the social context so that children of both sexes choose games suitable to their sex: “In the child there is of course an innate tendency to play, but the ways in which the game is set out, its rules, its objects are undoubtedly the product of a culture” (Gianini Belotti, 1973: 82). Boys and girls learn very early on that there are “right” toys and “wrong” ones for each sex and therefore, after a certain age, do not even try to ask their parents for an unsuitable toy because they know perfectly well that this will be denied. The request for a

“wrong” toy is a source of concern for parents since it is a sign that the training process of the sex roles has failed: “The differentiation in games presented to males and females is such that “certain preferences” after the age of four or five begin to signify that the male or female child has not accepted their role, therefore something went wrong” (Gianini Belotti, 1973: 88). Research conducted by Istat (2005) through a specific agreement with the Istituto degli Innocenti showed that even today tastes expressed by boys and girls in terms of games are shaped on traditional gender stereotypes: playing football, with cars, with video games and computers are the preferred activities for males; dolls, puppets, games of household activities are favourite among females.

From the analysis of textbooks a more complex picture arises, with some clear signs of change. Favourite games of male protagonists in the stories include: remote controlled tanks, space rockets, robots, playing cards, using the computer and playing chess. For females we have: dolls, Barbie, chess, checkers. As for sports, boys play football, basketball, ice hockey, and go swimming, while females go skiing, skating, swimming and play basketball. Other male activities are: cycling, listening to music, singing, playing the flute, playing the electric organ, drawing, horse-riding, playing tricks, watching TV, making up stories, reading and writing fairy tales, reading adventure books, reading comics, learning magical arts. Young male protagonists of the stories later claim to have a passion for cars, music, physics and mathematics. Instead, the leisure time activities of female protagonists are: enjoying nature, running along country lanes, collecting stamps, collecting postcards, cooking, cleaning, drawing, giving big parties, watching TV, reading, acting in plays, receiving friends as well as constructing a barometer and making small scientific experiments. The girls also state their interest in mathematics and reflection on language.

Critical analysis of this data reveals that while the male children's favourite activities are those typically associated with their sex, in the girls' world, the situation is much more varied. Regarding males, only traditional masculine games are mentioned (such as a space rocket, a tank and a robot); for females, alongside traditional games (dolls, Barbie), there are new games like checkers or chess. Even in sports we see a remarkable convergence between the sexes that, once again, is one-directional: male children play football, basketball, ice hockey (men's sports) and go swimming, while the girls practice not only skating (women's sports), but also skiing, swimming and basketball. The same applies to pastimes: the males are fond of music, reading, physics and mathematics while among girls some contradictions emerge. There are some girls who enjoy doing the cleaning, cooking and giving big parties, while others enjoy drama, build barometers and make scientific experiments. Some girls are portrayed according to old stereotypes, such as future «little housewives»; while others express wishes and interests entirely new to their sex.

These data would seem to suggest that even in textbooks that generally portray very traditional gender roles, there is some space for transformation that however only concerns girls. This is a confirmation that changes in male gender roles seem to be slower and more difficult.

The quantitative analysis of this study reaches two main conclusions. Firstly, in the world shown by textbooks, the masculine gender is much more widely represented. Secondly, there are substantial differences in the roles and characters attributed to males and females. Men carry out a wide variety of professions and are free to move in public spaces; women have a narrow range of employment opportunities, they spend most of their time in the home and are much more tied to their role as mothers than their husbands. Men are described as brave, determined, proud and gratified; women as caring, sweet, patient and sensitive. The images, on the other hand, merely confirm the fact of inequality between the sexes, making things worse. In the overview, the male gender is still favoured, while the female remains in the background, as if less important and interesting. To sum up, the publishers examined demonstrate a lack of commitment to addressing the issue of gender equality. Most of them cannot even solve the most obvious problem: balancing numerically the protagonists of both sexes. But the quantitative disparity between males and females is symptomatic of differences on a deeper level, as is revealed from the qualitative analysis.

Results of the qualitative analysis. Stereotypical representations: the woman in the house, the man at work

Starting with the stereotypes applied to the female gender, we can make a comparison between women and girls. Concerning psychological and behavioral characteristics, the girls are represented according to traditional clichés: they are fearful, weepy, well-mannered, thoughtful, good, helpful, vain. In physical terms, girls are described as pretty, flirty, graceful, quiet, fragrant. More complex is the framework that covers adult women. They are depicted as apprehensive, weepy, fanatically tidy, vain, good, sweet, affectionate, and of course provided with a strong maternal instinct.

One recurring detail that emerges from my analysis concerns beauty, seen as a necessary requirement for a woman. In various texts, stereotypes of female beauty that is interpreted as a necessary quality, even as a fundamental criterion for judging a woman. Reading these texts, the idea is reinforced that being beautiful for a woman is a merit while being ugly is a demerit, almost a fault. On the other hand for the male gender beauty is not seen as a value. None of the protagonists of the stories analyzed is judged using “beauty”, thus giving the implicit message that a man must be assessed for his intellectual qualities, not for his physical ones. One can therefore say that, as far as physical descriptions and their meanings assigned are concerned, a strong asymmetry emerges between males and females.

Another interesting area is that of the activities and the roles assigned to women. Stereotypes in this context flourish: the mother takes care of the chores at home, loves cooking and embroidering. Domestic activities in textbooks, still appear as the main occupation of women.



Image 2. Gender stereotypes in elementary schools texts

If we compare the stereotypical characteristics related to women with those referring to girls we observe a strong correlation. The similar aspects are many: being good and well-behaved, loving, caring, crying easily, beautiful and vain. This conformity is easily justifiable. In fact, girls consider adult women as reference models and then try to imitate them. In the texts analyzed the process of «training» girls to become good women and mothers is clearly evident. Sometimes the girls are represented as miniature women, who already know how to take care of household tasks and already seem to possess a kind of maternal instinct.

Regarding male gender stereotypes, we can also distinguish stereotypes applied to men and children, and compare them. The young central characters of the stories are represented as: resourceful, autonomous, active, stubborn, independent, brave, self-confident, practical, rude, mischievous, lively. The men are: adventurous, strong and brave. It makes you wonder if that is all they are. Surprisingly, the traits applied to the male gender are narrow and limited. Instead, women are described in relation to a wide variety of attitudes and feelings, while the vast majority of men are characterized by three words: strong, adventurous, brave.

It is important then to analyze the roles attributed to these strong and brave men: men work (occupations outside the home are reserved for them), drive a car, maintain their family and they make important scientific discoveries, in other words they «make history». Another stereotype is that of the scholarly man, cultured, wise, sometimes presumptuous. A comparison swiftly comes to mind: note that while women are described and evaluated on the basis of their physical appearance, men are more often judged by their intellectual talent. The judgment is obviously not always positive: men are sometimes criticized for being too confident about their knowledge and skills. But the significant fact is that whilst beauty

is often used as the only criterion for judging a woman, for the male gender the criterion for judging is often culture and intelligence.

Finally, regarding the father protagonists in the stories, there are two main types of fathers described: «bad dads» and «good dads». The bad dad is a silent father, detached, severe, sometimes violent. These dads have a bad relationship with their children. On the other hand, there are the «good fathers» who could be defined as «absent but exceptional». In two stories there is an idealization of a father figure: the father, who is absent all week for work, spends only Saturdays with his child (male) but is able to conquer all the child's esteem and affection («And I say to myself, I have the most wonderful dad in the world. And it is true!»).

The picture created of fathers is not therefore homogenous: there are fathers who have detached, cold relationships with their children and fathers who instead have great relationships with them. However, the result can still be identical in terms of the amount of time and attention that fathers devote to their children which in both cases remain much lower than that of mothers. The «bad dad» does not seem to want to invest his energy and attention in his children: he establishes rigid, detached, dismissive relationships with them. The «good father», on the other hand, also devotes very little time to his children: he is good but only for one day a week. This suggests that, in the imagery conveyed by textbooks, the education and care of children are still pretty much considered exclusive duties of the mother.

2.1.2 Italian textbooks of the years 2008-2010 and 2014

In this part we analyse the results of a recent study conducted by Corsini and Scierri (2016) in order to analyse to primary school textbooks edited in the years 2008-2010 and 2014 based on the same research methodology used in the study presented above (Biemmi, 2010). The fact that the same methodology has been used permits us to draw a comparison over the last 15 years. The results of the analysis show that gender stereotypes are even more pronounced than in textbooks of the year 2000. For instance, in the textbooks examined, male characters are overwhelming if compared with female ones, (they are almost twice) and their presence increases if the story takes place in open spaces, or in the past, or in case of adventure stories. Gender discrimination is perhaps more evident in the world of professions.

In the sample of textbooks examined, professions were grouped into 4 groups: teaching, care work, fairytale professions and other professions. Women feature heavily in the field of teaching and care work, while the greatest asymmetry relates to area of other professions. While the chances of male professions vary widely (92 professional profiles are counted for men in the 2014 editions and 78 in 2008-2009 editions)

female professions are much more limited (13 and 27 respectively). Such data also indicates that the trend in gender equality is worsening over the years.

If we shift our attention from the adult world to the children world we find the same situation. For instance, boys have wide choices in the games (construction toys, electric trains, marbles, etc.), while playing with dolls is still the prevalent activity for girls. For instance among the favorite activities of little boys we find “riding a bicycle and playing a musical instrument, while the favorite amusement of little girls are “telling stories and sewing/embroidering”.

Finally a comparison has been made between those publishers that have adhered to the Polite Code and those that haven't and it is relevant to note that no significant differences have been measured in relation to four aspects: the gender of the protagonists (overwhelming male - about 62% - in both cases,), the location of the story (larger presence of male protagonists in open air environments in both cases around 39%-40%) and a larger presence of female protagonists in closed spaces in both cases, around 32%. Gender asymmetry is confirmed in relation to professional role and the definition of male and female protagonists in relation to physical attributes. The fact that there are basically no differences between publishers that have adhered and those that have not adhered to the Polite code indicates that this voluntary instrument aimed at promoting gender equality in textbooks has not functioned until today.

In conclusion it can be argued that in both analysis, males, as shown by the quantitative analysis, are the masters of the scene, their importance is underlined by the fact that everyone is constantly talking about them. The texts constantly describe their actions, their heroic deeds and adventures, their travels, their crafts, their characteristics of strength and courage, their culture, their intelligence. In this context, there cannot be as much space to talk in detail about females. Some textual fragments are reserved for them, the space left by that devoted to be males must be sufficient to define them. In this dull and demoralizing setting, qualitative analysis brings to light some, albeit limited, attempts at innovation, such as the proposal of new models or the criticism of existing ones. It was revealed that both criticism and proposals were applied mostly to the female gender and rarely to the male. This one-way change in direction is not highly desirable, not even for males, since the definition of rigid, stereotyped gender roles is harmful and limiting for both sexes, not just for females. It would be appropriate, therefore, that the breaking of gender stereotypes come from both directions: the female model should come closer and merge with that of the male and similarly the male pattern should learn to relate and integrate with these characteristics (sensitivity, sweetness) and roles (care of children) previously considered feminine.

2.2 Website of the Ministry of Education, Research and University on school guidance and vocational training

In this section we present analysis of the material included in the website of the Ministry of Education, University and Research dedicated to school guidance and vocational training¹⁷. The portal is intended as a virtual guide for lower secondary school students (11-13 years old) and upper secondary school students (13-18 years) to help them choose the next school (or University) they are going to attend. We provide here an analysis of the images, videos and language used based on the main elements of the 3R method. At a first sight, we can say that the verbal and iconographic language used is simple and captivating, designed for a youthful target (image 1). There are three highlights guiding the user:

- what will you do after lower secondary school?
- and after graduation?
- and then ... discover the Erasmus Plus Programme



Image 3. Website of the Ministry of Education, University and Research dedicated to school guidance and vocational training

With reference to the post-graduate choice, it is suggested to take an “orientation” test that allows to build a tailored "Profile Orientation" by entering data on your past school experience.

Another feature characterizing the homepage is a male icon at the beginning of the orientation path, which should symbolize the female/male student wanting to embark on the path but is actually represented only by an image of a man.

¹⁷ <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/>

AFTER LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL

Four possible paths follow the question "What will you do after lower secondary school":

1. Professional institutes
2. Technical institutes
3. New high schools
4. Educational and vocational training

Within the four paths, we have focused our attention on those leading to professions in the care and education sectors, and more generally in predominantly female sectors. The purpose is to verify whether gender stereotypes play a role in promoting certain educational careers typically attended by girls that could disincentive the male presence.

It was decided to subdivide the analysis by focusing on three aspects:

1. analysis of the written language used on the webpage;
2. analysis of the image(s) representing the path;
3. analysis of the promotional video.

Among the technical institutes the focus of attention was given to the *social and health care institutes*; and among the new high schools it was chosen to analyze the communication mode used for orienting towards the *high school for human sciences*.

2.2.1 Professional institute on "social and health services"

By clicking on the homepage for the social and health care institute you will end up on a page providing useful information to find out if this is the right path for you¹⁸. At the top there is a neutral image symbolizing the profession (see image 2)

¹⁸ <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/> (Site > [I professionali](#) > Servizi socio-sanitari)

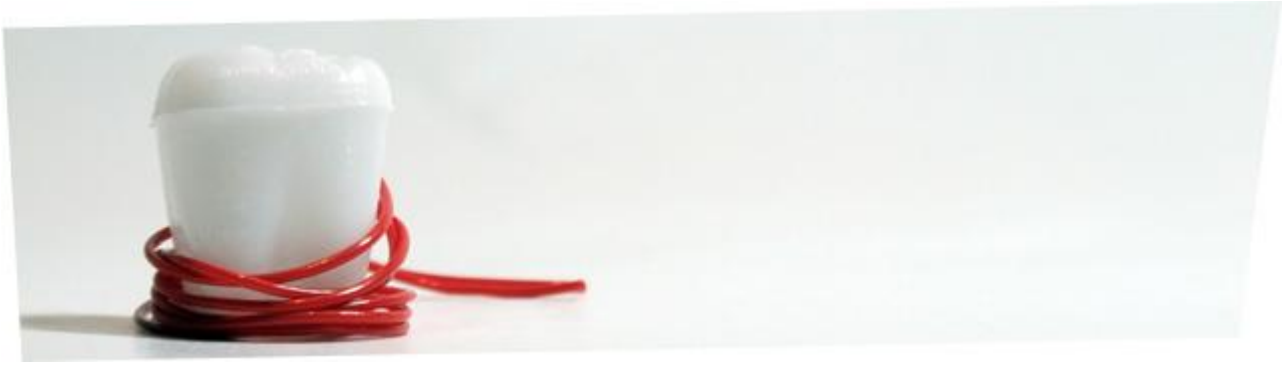


Image 4 Social and health care course

On the page it reads that this path is "FOR WHO" ...: *Is interested in the health and bio-psycho-social well-being of people and communities; he/she has good relational skills to interact positively with others.*

"IF ...": *You imagine a professional future aimed at improving the well-being of society and people; you are interested in scientific and technological novelties in the increasingly innovative optics and dental sectors.*

"YOU WILL ACQUIRE COMPETENCES ...": *To organize and implement interventions responding to the socio-sanitary needs of people and communities and promoting good health and well-being.*

"AND YOU WILL LEARN TO ...": *Organize and implement interventions supporting the socio-sanitary needs and the social inclusion of people, communities and disadvantaged groups; Participate in the recognition of the local socio-sanitary needs by interfacing with institutional and professional actors; Use evaluation and monitoring methods and tools in regard to the delivered services, with the aim of improving and enhancing resources.*

"AND THE JOB?"

The most popular professions accessible with post-graduate education are:

- social and health care professional,*
- Socio-cultural facilitator,*
- Optician,*
- Dental technician.*

Language is neutral; professional qualifications are declined only in masculine (not as feminine).

Analysis of the video for social and health care professions

The video is introduced by a short sketch, "Lilian & Ale", featuring a girl and a boy and using an ironic and informal tone to introduce the user to the topic of social and health care professions. The sketch - which is presented at the beginning, in the middle of the video and at the end – portrays gender stereotypes and reiterates that **care is of female competence**. This is the plot: He is ill (he has toothache and headache) and she takes care of him by preparing an herbal tea and giving him advice. In the first sketch she says: "one needs to have a bit of general medical knowledge" and in the sketch proposed halfway through the video she announces her intention to enroll in the social and health care course.

The video continues with interviews with two girls attending this course. The interviews are about: the reasons for choosing it, the satisfaction related to that choice, the passions and interests that have led to it. The tone is colloquial and intimate.

Here are some significant extracts:

Female student 1: "I love studying others. I love to understand how other people work and indeed my favorite subject is psychology."

Female student 2: "What makes me most angry is selfishness, everyone should think a little more about others and not just about themselves."

Female student 1: "One day I want... that as I study the poets Foscolo and Leopardi, others will study me. I want to be remembered!"

Female student 2: "In 10 years I see myself in a white coat in hospital. I do not see myself married ... but I do see myself with a child."

Female student 1: "In 10 years I see myself as a career woman, in a suit, all ready for work and with children, yes, the first of the five I want! And married."

Female student 2: "I chose this school because later on I would like to help people who are in trouble. (...) I'm doing a traineeship at a Center for persons with disabilities."

Female student 1: "Helping others is a wonderful experience. At first you may encounter some difficulties not knowing exactly what to do, being the first time... but when you go there you feel free and serene. Gratified because you feel useful and this is beautiful. I personally feel very happy when I do it."

An interview with the President of the A.G.V.H. (Parent and Volunteers Association for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities) follows.

President of AGVH: "They often ask me how we interact with people with disabilities. There is no secret: just be natural. They appreciate a gesture, a caress, a smile... And that's already a lot."

There is also an informative part about the duration of the course, the subjects being studied etc.

The two female students are also interviewed during the internship at the A.G.V.H. and have the opportunity to express their satisfaction for the studies undertaken and the work they are going to do, which is important to them because socially useful (in the interviews they repeatedly state that "**helping others is nice**").

The video shows that the classroom is composed of **all girls students, but the teacher is a man**. There are also images of the future working environment (e.g. hospitals, clinics) showing both male and female professionals.

There is also an interview with the "expert" - Alberto de Toni, chairman of the Committee for the Reorganization of Professional Institutes - who highlights the job opportunities and job placement for those who graduate in this course.

OVERALL ANALYSIS: The video shows that the social and health care profession have a female target (the two testimonials are girls, the classes are entirely female) and it is reiterated that the main reason for choosing this type of study is to help and take care of others. The video therefore reinforces the stereotype of care as an eminently feminine activity. The focus is more on "care" rather than on the medical aspects of the profession (which are also relevant in the curriculum).

Although the information seems to target a totally feminine audience, it is worthwhile noting that the roles of professionals and experts are attributed to two men: the A.G.V.H president and the Chair of the Committee for the Reorganization of Professional Institutions. It hence creates a hierarchy between men and women where women are simple users while men have a role as experts or professionals. Again, the video reinforces a stereotyped view of gender roles based on a horizontal and vertical professional segregation.

Another aspect which is worth noting is that the video does not allow space for any diversity in terms of sexuality, ethnicity, disability. The classroom is composed by all white, abled female. There is no representation of any visible difference in terms of gender identity, transgender persons etc. There is an underlined heterosexual assumption as the couple of the sketch is composed by a girl and a boy and the one girl interviewed images her future life married (although one says she doesn't see herself as married, but as

having children, however this is not enough to challenge the heterosexual norm). There are also no disabled children represented in the class, whereas disabled persons are the object of care in one internship and they are portrayed as children, in an over-simplified and diminishing way as they are described as always happy, just needing some care, affection and attention.

2.2.2 High school for human sciences

By clicking on the social and health care homepage you will see a page providing useful information to help deciding whether this is the right course for you.¹⁹ At the top there is a picture featuring a girl in the foreground and in the background a boy (see image 3)



Image 5. High school for human sciences

The page reads that: "The high school curriculum, through typical human sciences related tools, leads the student to the multiple dimensions through which a human being develops as a person and as a subject of reciprocity and relationships: the experience of self and of others, interpersonal relationships, educational relationships, forms of social life and care for the common good, institutional forms in the socio-educational context, relationships with the world of identities and values."

It is "FOR WHO":

- wants to grasp the complexity and specificity of training processes;
- wants to master languages, methodologies and investigation techniques in the field of human sciences.

"IF":

¹⁹ <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/> (Site > [I Licei](#) > delle Scienze Umane)

- You are interested in the meaning of human condition, coexistence and social organization;
- If you are curious about exploring the reality of the present;
- If you are curious about social dynamics.

Language is declined in masculine (falsely neutral): for example, referring to student declined in masculine ("*studente*") ("the high school curriculum orientates the *studente*"...) and stating that it is a suitable course to you if you are "interested" declined in masculine ("*interessato*") ("You are interested (*interessato*) in the meaning of the human condition"). Therefore a contradiction emerges between a falsely neutral language (declined in masculine) and the images and overall representation of this school curriculum as oriented to girls.

Analysis of the video for high school for human sciences

Also this video is introduced by a short sketch, "Lilian & Ale", featuring a girl and a boy and using an ironic and informal tone to introduce the user to the topics related to the high school for human sciences. A particular strong reference is made to psychology, as a central subject in the curriculum. Some interesting aspects emerge in Lilian & Ale's video. First of all, the scene is set at home and takes place before lunch. He is not satisfied with what she cooked - he hates pasta with potatoes; she connects this repulsion to a possible childhood trauma: "Ale, whenever you hear about pasta and potatoes you stress out. Perhaps we could try to understand the origins of this phobia of yours". Ale replies: "and what about you having the phobia of green scarves?" This exchange continues with Lilian claiming to want to learn how to "help society and find the cure to these problems" (presumably of psychological origin). Ale replies: "**You have the rescuer syndrome!**" and Lilian concludes: "**Look, this is about psychology: have you ever heard of it?**"

The sketch is full of stereotypes indicating the idea that worrying about other people's problems and wanting to help are female interests; these interests are dismissed and brought back to the stereotype of the "rescuer" (which in Italian has a female connotation: "*crocerossina*", literally "Red Cross little nurse"). In addition, as it was the case in the video about social and health care professions, Lilian has the role of the "know-it-all schoolteacher", who always has something to teach to his inadequate and somewhat childish partner (while she has a more adult and self-aware attitude, which corresponds to another stereotype).

The video continues with an interview with a female student attending this course, interrupted by an interview with her mother. The interviews are about: the reasons for that choice, the satisfaction for the

course undertaken, the passions and interests that have led to it. The tone is colloquial and intimate and it also touches upon aspects of the student's life that are not inherent in her studies (sport, friendships, etc.).

Here are some significant extracts:

There's only one interviewee, Federica:

"My favorite color is pink (smiles)". (The student room is completely pink.)

"As a child I first wanted to become a **pediatrician**, which I called the children's doctor, then I changed my mind and wanted to become a **rock star**, finally a **veterinarian**, and then I wanted to become an **actress**".

" I do not yet imagine my future ... however I hope to be happy".

"People choose the high school for human sciences in order to become, for example, a psychologist or a teacher. I would love to enter the theatre academy later on but I know it's very difficult to get admitted, so I chose this high school because the second job I'd like the most is to become a **nursery teacher**."

"In my class there are 30 people, **28 girls and two boys**. The classes should be a bit smaller, I love all of my classmates but it gets tight to be 30 in a classroom... **In our high school there aren't so many boys** because I think they prefer science and technology to pedagogical and literary subjects. Guys from lower secondary schools, please do come here because we are all girls !! (smiles) "

The video shows classroom images where just one male student appears. The teacher is a woman, however.

There is also an interview with the "expert": Luigi Berlinguer, former Minister of Education.

Overall analysis: in the video the topic of the feminization of the school career in human sciences is put in evidence without being investigated, and is instead motivated based on stereotypes ("In our high school there aren't so many boys because I think they prefer science and technology to pedagogical and literary subjects"), which only confirms the "normality" of this divergence in the school careers. Federica's incitement to boys of the lower secondary school to enroll in her school is made in a humorous tone and does not intend to seriously challenge this situation. It would have been more useful if it had been the "expert" addressing the issue of educational segregation, explaining its reasons, and suggesting alternatives. From the video it is possible to draw the conclusion that the profession of teacher as well as that of psychologist (the two privileged professional careers for this course) are both female professions. A boy who looks at this video is obviously not stimulated to embark on this path.

2.2.3 Options offered after diploma

After diploma, the system offers 4 options:

1. High artistic and musical education
2. University
3. Higher technical institutes
4. Job market

By clicking on each of these four paths, they break down in more options. Without embarking in a detailed analysis, it is interesting to look at the icons that represent the various options.

High artistic and musical education

By clicking on "High artistic and musical education" you get to a fairly blurred image, so the visual impact being too strong, but from a more in-depth analysis it emerges that the two represented figures are men.

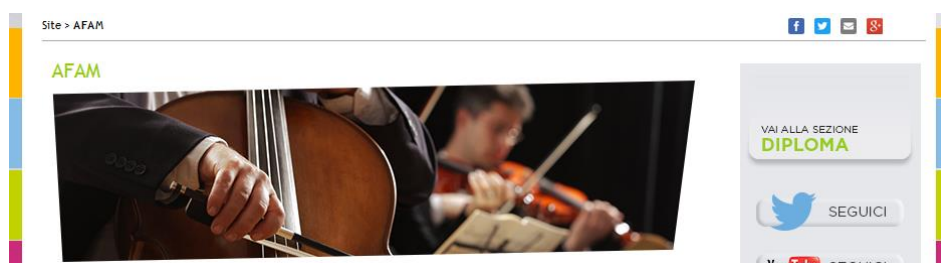


Image 6. High artistic and musical education

By clicking on "University" you access an image representing a fair proportion of males and females (6 females and 6 males), although the girls in the first row give the immediate visual impact of a greater female visibility.



Immagine 7. Università

By entering the pages dedicated to the various faculties²⁰, it comes out that the icons used to visualize the various academic paths are "symbolic", i.e. they do not have men and women shown as future professionals, but neutral images. Probably this was an intentional choice to avoid stereotyping certain studies as "more suitable" to girls or boys. Here are some examples:

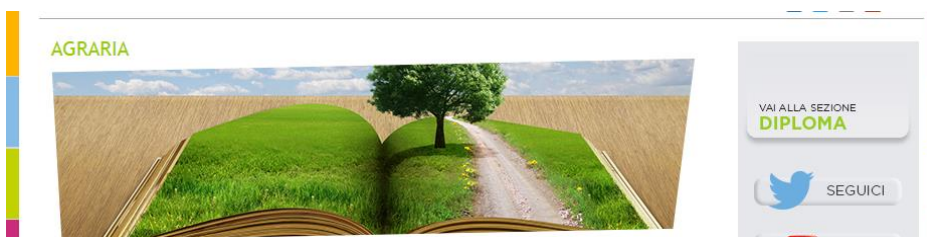


Image 8. Agriculture

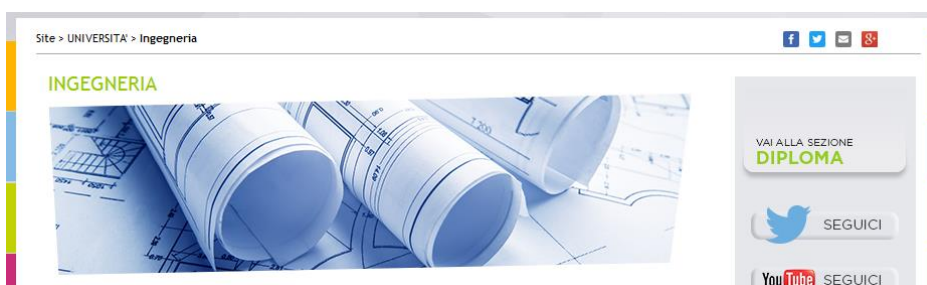


Image 9. Engineering

²⁰ <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/universita.html#sthash.TkN5TeKL.eWA2FpH8.dpbs>

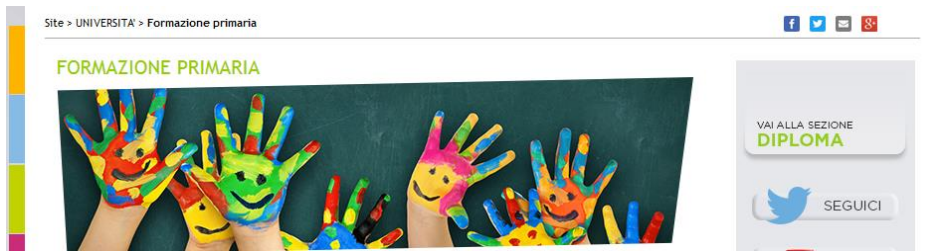


Image 10. Primary education



Image 11. Psychology

"Medicine" is an exception, as there are two body parts (not whole figures) representing a woman and a man; this image pays attention in showing them as equals, even though there are still differences in the way female and male characteristics are portrayed. While both wear coats which are typical of the nurse/medical profession, the man wears a tie, which is considered a symbol of professionalism and the woman is represented with a coat that leaves some skin visible. However she wears a clock which also regarded as a symbol of professionalism.



Image 12. Medicine

The icon on the homepage of the Higher Technical Institutes²¹ shows a group of 11 men and women (including 6 women and 5 men) representing the various professional careers corresponding to the various courses. This image is strongly influenced by gender roles: men prevail in technical work, while women prevail in care professions.

²¹ <http://www.istruzione.it/orientamento/its.html#sthash.yEUhisFB.dpbs>



Image 13. Higher technical institutes

III. Conclusions and ideas for national projects

This report has emphasized how gender segregation in education and employment is still rather evident in Italy. Educational paths preparing for the teaching and care professions are followed by an overwhelming majority of girls and this is reflected in employment choices which see a tiny proportion of men employed in care jobs. Moreover, a number of analysis on school textbooks have unveiled how these are heavily gender stereotyped both in relation to a greater presence of boys and men as protagonists of the stories portrayed and in relation to the super traditional gender structure of the professional world which emerges. Very few men are represented in care professions which appear as the realm of women. In addition men have access to a much broader range of jobs than those of women. Concerning the way educational and University choices are advertised in the portal of the Minister of Education, a contradiction emerges between the way these are described in the texts and the stories portrayed in the videos. In particular those secondary schools that prepare students for care professions are advertised in a way which is not attractive for boys and the issue of gender segregation is not seriously addressed in the videos and interviews.

Concerning measures aimed at tackling gender segregation in education, we can conclude that in Italy there are currently no specific initiatives aimed at tackling boys in order to involve them more in the care and education professions. On the contrary, in recent years there has been a growing body of initiatives aimed at involving girls in the STEM subject which provide for a first model to be followed. Moreover, thanks to the exchange and mutual learning seminars taking place in the context of the “Boys in care” project, Italy could profit of the experience of other countries in which this typology of initiatives have been going on since some years.

Thus, the findings of this report highlight the need to activate in Italy paths promoting more equitable educational models, which would allow to overcome persisting gender stereotypes that still strongly limit boys’ and girls’ choices towards traditional goals. It is about setting up gender-sensitive orientation paths to encourage diversification within educational and professional choices for both genders, making these

choices as authentic as possible and rooted in real passions and interests, rather than being socially-imposed. (Lo Presti, 2009)

The already quoted 2010 Eurydice report includes Italy in the list of countries (together with Portugal, Greece, Romania, Estonia, Slovakia and the Czech Republic) which have not yet put in place real gender equality policies in the field of education. The specific report on Italy (Eurydice, 2010b) contains detailed data that justifies this critical statement, but also a number of useful ideas to outline a gender-sensitive orientation project in our schools.

The Report on Italy starts off with this statement: “In Italy gender inequality in education is not a question of concern. This doesn’t mean that there is not a gender issue but that gender is not perceived as a problem by national authorities and policy makers, at least in the educational sector. Policies to avoid gender discrimination and to promote equality of opportunities between males and females are put in place in the labour sector. In the government there is a Board for Equality of Opportunities (Ministero delle Pari Opportunità) but generally speaking it doesn’t deal directly with education” (Eurydice, 2010b: 1). These words describe clearly the main problem in Italy, where the issue of gender inequality in education is not perceived as a problematic one. Therefore the first step to initiate orientation project that are based on gender equality is to realize that a problem does exist and can only be addressed if educational institutions focus on it and analyze it in all its complexity (Gamberi, Maio, Selmi, 2010).

This needs assessment report has highlighted how the Ministry of Education has recently initiated specific projects aimed at tackling gender segregation in education which involves girls by promoting initiatives in the field of STEM. This is in line with what is emphasized in the Eurydice report and that Italy shares with the vast majority of other EU countries: gender-sensitive orientation courses are generally addressed to girls, and not to boys. The issue of educational segregation is generally addressed through promotion of educational initiatives aimed at encouraging girls to choose careers in the field of technology and natural sciences, while there are no national strategies aimed at overcoming gender stereotypes that strongly affect also male educational paths.

The “Boys in care” project is founded on the idea that the social construction of gender roles has a limiting effect on both men and women. It is therefore necessary to think about a gender-sensitive educational orientation aimed at encouraging diversification of both male and female educational and professional choices. In this perspective, there is also the need to rethink textbooks. In relation to the issue of gender equality as presented in school textbooks, the Eurydice Report states that in Italy “there are no official guidelines or regulations on gender for authors of educational texts”. On the other hand the Report recalls the positive experience of the already quoted Polite project. However, as emphasized by Corsini and Scierri (2016), even those publishers that have adhered to the voluntary code, have not endorsed it in

practice and hence the textbooks continue to present a very rigid, sexist and anachronistic concept of gender, as shown in this report. For this reason it seems absolutely necessary to invest in updating textbooks, so to take into account the radical changes that have taken place in the female world, but also in the male one, in the last decades.

A further step to engage in a gender-sensitive orientation project is to promote appropriate training of teachers on a gender culture characterized by equal opportunities. The Eurydice Report states that: “Gender is not included as a topic in guidelines or curricula for teacher initial education and there are not specific gender guidelines relating to teachers’ day-to-day practice in schools” (Eurydice, 2010a: 10). This lack of gender mainstreaming on the part of the teaching staff, and particularly by the female teachers who represent the majority, reiterates the idea of a “neutral” school, where gender, age and body differences seem to dissolve.

Until now in Italy a number of specific projects have been carried out in schools on issues related to gender equality, gender stereotypes, prevention of gender-based violence, promotion and non-discrimination in relation to Lgbt population. However these projects are not carried out on a systematic basis and have not lead to overall systematic changes in the school curriculum. Moreover, as already underlined, those projects aimed at promoting non traditional career paths have been addressed to girls only. However, some recent legislative developments have explicitly acknowledged the need to dedicate a more systematic attention to gender equality in the school system. In particular law 107/2015 – the so-called school reform law – requires that “the three-year plan of the education ensures the implementation of equal opportunities principles by promoting education in gender equality in schools of all levels, the prevention of gender-based violence and all discriminations”. This law also recalls the Extra-ordinary Plan of Action against sexual and gender violence of 2015 which was foreseen by the law 119/2013 through which Italy ratified the Istanbul Convention on violence against women. The Plan explicitly includes education among the means to prevent violence against women and refers to the need “to educate to equality and respect of differences, in particular by overcoming stereotypes about social roles, the representation and the meaning of being women and men, girls and boys”. The Plan also refers to the training of teachers and in relation to school texts it advocates for the need to initiate a specific reflection on the use of language and the presence of stereotypes in school texts. To this aim the Plan invites to re-consider the experience of the Polite project through the setting up of a technical body composed of publishers for the revision and updating of the self-regulatory Code about gender stereotypes as a fundamental factor in relation to school texts and didactic materials.

Based on the findings of this needs assessment report and on the recent approval of the legislative texts described above, a recommendation can be formulated to build a steering group of gender experts,

politicians, teachers, school book publishers and PR experts not only to revise the Code of conduct but also to develop examples for more gender equal vocational orientation material.

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