

Monograph Issue:

*Gender-based Violence
And Family Violence:
The State of Art in Research and Intervention*

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Foreword

The state of the art in research and intervention against gender based violence

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This is the first number of the new international edition of the *Rivista di Studi familiari*, now bearing the title *Interdisciplinary Journal of Family Studies*. This is a monographic number focused on the issue of gender based violence, in particular on the phenomenon of intrafamilial violence against women.

The problem of gender violence characterizes the whole human history and still exists in every Country in the world. Violence against women, which is one of the main obstacles in achieving gender equality and a pervasive violation of human rights, is both universal and particular: it is universal as gender violence is prevalent in every culture and it is particular because it appears in specific forms in various contexts, from workplace to family, taking many different expressions, which include physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence.

Gender violence inhibits women from enjoying their fundamental freedoms, such as the right to life, education and security, in the respect of a range of opportunities varying from the highest standard in physical and mental health to the employment and the free participation in public life.

The universal violence against woman is related to lasting historical and cultural frames, but first of all it results from relational inequalities influenced by both psychological dimensions of individuals and social

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interactions, between which familial factors are hanging. Female homicides and infanticide, genital mutilations, trafficking, forced prostitution, reification, serfdom and slavery are definitely the most evident situations where female condition is severely humiliated and dehumanized, but there is also a more common and most widespread form of violence: the domestic one, which is a specific form of intrafamilial violence appearing as a pattern of behavior usually repeated. It regards violent acts, including a series of sexual, psychological and physical ones coercively used in family against female components. The women who suffer from this kind of cruelty reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorders, related to severe effects of physical and psychological sufferance. Furthermore, the biopsychosocial consequences of this thick trouble present a high cost to the society: exponential growth of hospitalization, of medical and psychological interventions, of paid absences from job, consequent children difficulties: everything caused by the dramatic condition of the victims.

On April 7, 2011 the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against women and domestic violence, which is internationally binding legal instrument to prevent violence and protect victims. Its framework defines and criminalizes new forms of violence, such as forced marriages, genital mutilation, forced abortions and sterilization, stalking, physical, psychological and sexual violence. It is focused on the abolishment of female discrimination as well as harmful traditional practices in their regard, and promotes the access to information about women's rights, not considering domestic violence as a private matter but as a social crime. This policy recognizes and affirms the importance of concerted action by governments and international organizations to implement and coordinate policies fighting against gender violence in any public and private context.

The idea that gender based violence is a fundamental problem for the democracy requires the adoption of a global strategy to contrast it systematically. Unfortunately, the willingness has not increased overall and, despite violence against women has become recognized as a grave violation of human rights and a significant threat to women's health and her well being, domestic violence is still rarely recognized as criminal behavior and it is generally considered as a private problem all over the world. In particular, in the last twenty years, Europe is still far from becoming a "zone of zero tolerance" in terms of political, legal and cultural awareness.

In this volume many issues inherent to this problem are discussed. In the first article titled "Research on violence against women. A sociological perspective", Angela Maria Toffanin reviews some approaches to the study of gender violence from a sociological point of view. The review is a partial, diachronic reconstruction of the international debate since the 1970s. The theoretical perspective of this review aims to consider symbolic violence in its analysis of gender violence.

In the second paper “Violence Against Women. Assumptions for a Model of Care for women victims of violence: the ‘task force’ ”, Anna Coluccia, Lore Lorenzi, and Monica Bianchi consider the phenomenon as a social emergency because of the severity of its consequences on the psychological and physical integrity of victims, and discuss about the Task Force of Grosseto’s Local Health Authority.

In the third contribution “Trasformative Mediation in forced marriage cases”, Daniela Danna and Piera Cavenaghi aim at fostering a dialogue among different experiences and positions in regard to the use of mediators in cases of forced marriage. A particular methodology, cross cultural transformative mediation (rather close to victim advocacy), is explained and proponents and opponents of mediation are put into a fictive dialogue.

In the fourth article “Violence against women? What do the men have to say? A prevention project addressing adolescents in the Milan territory on the theme of violence against men”, Cesare Picco, Chiara Caravà, and Margherita Ferrario present the result of a series of interventions carried on with high school students. The main goal of the research, which operates applying the Life Skill Training Method, is to prevent violence against women among the students.

In the fifth paper titled “Women and domestic violence in the professional experience of Italian General Practitioner (IGP)”, Caterina Arcidiacono, Immacolata Di Napoli, Filomena Tuccillo, and Filomena Coronella consider a number of studies which have investigated the roots of the destructive power acting within the couple and the family and investigate how Italian general practitioners deal with this issue within their professional practice. A snowball sample of 268 participants has been taken, in order to collect their opinions and beliefs concerning the victim, the aggressor and the violent couple relationship.

In the sixth article titled “Narrowed family spaces: interlocking couples in intimate partner violence”, Alessandra Salerno, Maria Luisa Bonura and Angela Maria Di Vita, starting from a presentation of the phenomenon of intimate partner violence and of its various possible forms, present an overview of the most recent theoretical contributions on the topic, the dynamics of abuse in the couple and the main psychodynamic aspects that explain the possible manifestations and peculiarities of the effects of violence, both from the point of view of the abuser and the victim.

In the seventh paper “The intergenerational transmission of domestic violence: an analysis of data from the Italian “Women safety Survey”, Isabella Corazziari and Roberta Barletta analyse some risk factors of domestic violence against women, in particular the experience of abuses directly suffered or witnessed by the women or their partners during their respective childhood.

In the eighth article “Classic psychodrama as support in women suffering from violence in Albania and in Bulgaria”, Maria Silvia Guglielmin,

Nicoletta Gola, Basilicò, Gorinova, and Nikolova discuss the experiences of psycho drama therapeutic interventions that are part of the Daphne Empower Project and carried out in Albania and Bulgaria, considering the feedback from actor-therapists which includes a series of reflections on the psycho drama method and on the importance of creating a safe and comfortable work environment that can become a “container” for women that have been victims of violence.

In the ninth paper “The phenomenon of domestic violence in Romania: a prevention and intervention program”, Mihaela Bucuta, Gabriela Dima, Zoltani Katalin, and Antal Dalma Delia introduce and discuss the phenomenon of domestic violence and the development of social policy and services in Romania, in its transition from a former communist country (before 1989) to an actual European member (since 2007). The Authors also introduce one of the pioneering projects for Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence, developed within the organization “Home of Hope”.

In the tenth article “The intervention of UMAR in the area of violence against women”, Maria José Magalhães, Ilda Afonso, Lídia Ruiz, Isabel Monteiro, Vanessa Ribeiro, and Liliana Ribeiro discuss how the fight against gender based violence has been growing in Portugal in the last years. Nevertheless the problem is still grave and the prevalence data regarding this kind of violence are still worrying, the Authors show the important strategies and the political engagement activated in this Country and their progressive success.

In the eleventh paper “Teen dating violence: the need for early prevention”, Elisa Guidi, Giulia Magnatta, and Patrizia Meringolo consider the problem of teen dating violence which is a common experience with severe consequences for the psychological and physical health of those affected. The purpose of this paper is to review current empirical studies and reviews about this issue and to evaluate the need of developing programs designed to prevent violence. The Authors illustrates how the majority of prevention programs have shown positive short-term effects in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs and how future research should assess longer-term follow-up to determine the strong effects of the prevention programs in behavior changes

In the twelfth paper “The treatment of women victims of violence in Austria. A snapshot of a challenging mission”, Miriam Hendel, Ursula Luschnig, and Michael Wieser meant to provide a brief insight into the situation of gender violence and the treatment of victims in Austria. After a basic presentation of the statistical extent of violence in the Country and the relevance of the topic, the Authors examine the various support providers for victims, focusing on the aid organization “Caritas”.

In the last article “Daphne European Research Project: Italian Validation of Hypothesis Model (BDI-II, CORE-OM and SAI-R)”, Ines Testoni, Alessandra Armenti, Lucia Ronconi, Paolo Cottone, Michael Wieser, and Sibylla Verdi present Empower Daphne project, which is a “research-

intervention in real world” focused on the problem of gender-based violence, particularly within the family and the mother-daughter relationship. The goal, inherent to the investigation, the intervention and the change of the condition of subordination of women, is pursued through psychodramatic strategies. In this article the theoretical model and the validation of the assessment instruments in an Italian non clinical sample are discussed.

The Authors

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