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Comparative views on gender and social work [introduzione a: Gender and social work. New historical studies and interpretations]

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Gender and social work

New historical studies and interpretations

A cura di Elisabetta Bini e Elisabetta Vezzosi. Intervengono Berteke Waaldijk, Carola Togni e Dominique Malatesta, Marilena Dellavalle, Clarisa Ramos-Feijóo

Elisabetta Bini e Elisabetta Vezzosi

Comparative views on gender and social work

Over the last thirty years, scholars have devoted an increased attention to the history of social work and its intersection with gender, as well as race, class and ethnicity[1]. A growing number of studies has examined the ways in which the professionalization of social work from the late 19th century onwards, became a way for women of acquiring new public, political roles and professional leadership, and redefine dominant gender relations. Through the analysis of a wide range of sources, this research has allowed to recover the experience of female social workers and their professional organizations[2]. Furthermore, it has led to a reinterpretation and re-reading of several crucial moments of the 19th and 20th centuries[3], namely the history of the welfare state, the history of the transition from Fascism to democracy, and the history of international forms of cooperation. Thanks to the opening of new archives, more recently scholars have investigated the role female social workers had in several Central and Eastern European countries, and in the Soviet Union[4]. Moreover, they have examined

[1] L.S. Abrams, Laura Curran, *Between Women: Gender and Social Work in Historical Perspective*, «Social Service Review», 2004, 3; R. Dahle, *Social work: A History of gender and class in the profession*, «Ephemera», 2012, 3.
[2] S. Hering, B. Waaldijk (eds.), *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960). Female Pioneers and their Influence on the Development of International Social Organizations*, Berlin, VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2003.
[3] J. Cote, *The West Point of the Philanthropic Service: Reconsidering Social Work's Welcome to Women in the Early Twentieth Century*, «Social Service Review», 2013, 1.
[4] G. Haus, D. Schulte (eds.), *Amid Social Contradictions. Towards a History of Social Work in Europe*, Opladen-Farmington Hills, Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2009.

the ways in which social work was (and is) influenced by international institutions such as the United Nations, and how it was affected by larger phenomena such as globalization and neoliberalism[5].

This Forum seeks to address the following issues: how did female social workers influence social policies and reform movements in different national contexts and at different moments in time? And how were these policies and movements gendered? How did women's leadership shape the professionalization of social work? How did female social workers influence welfare states in the US and Western Europe, and social policies in the Soviet Union? How did the crisis of welfare states and the rise of neoliberalism transform female social work in different national and international contexts? How did female social workers redefine international institutions during the 20th century? And how did they affect international forms of cooperation, through – for example – their professional organizations? What was the importance of race and/or colonialism/decolonization in influencing the history of social work from a gendered perspective? How did women social workers promote gender equality[6]? How did female social workers interact with and redefine a wide-range of issues, such as human rights, social justice, and gender inequality at different moments of time and in different national and international contexts? And how have they addressed international problems having to do with human trafficking, child labor, domestic violence, global migration, and refugee crises?

In the opening article, Berteke Waaldijk provides an original perspective on the history of social work, by shifting from a national to a global framework. As she points out, the history of social work went hand in hand with the creation of welfare states between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the process of globalization has led to a deep transformation of the nation-state, along with that of welfare policies. Especially in contexts of migration and refugee crises, social assistance is not provided by states, but rather by international organizations and institutions, as well as by NGOs. As a result, human rights discourse has become an important reference point for many social workers, with deep implications from a gender point of view. Waaldijk's article opens up the possibility of thinking about social work in colonial and postcolonial contexts, and recognizing the importance of race in social work policies. As several scholars have argued, white middle-class women in the colonies often considered social policies as part and parcel of their empire's civilizing mission. The ways in which such racial assumption shaped transnational missionary work and exclusionary welfare policies in different na-

[5] L.M. Healy, R.J. Link (eds.), *Handbook of International Social Work. Human Rights, Development, and the Global Profession*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011.

[6] L. Dominelli, *Claiming Women's Places in the World: Social Workers' Roles in Eradicating Gender Inequality Globally*, in L.M. Healy, R.J. Link (eds.), *Handbook of International Social Work*, cit.

tional and imperial context, however, has yet to be studied.

Adopting a comparative approach, Carola Togni and Dominique Malatesta examine two moment in the history of Switzerland's social work – the early twentieth century and the 1960s and 1970s – and argue that gender had a crucial role in shaping the profession. The article argues that whereas during the 1910s the professionalization of social work and the establishment of the first training school was strongly influenced by the feminist movements, during the 1960s and the 1970s the profession became increasingly masculine. As in other national contexts, in the early twentieth century social work was associated with philanthropic reform policies carried out by middle-class women, and often linked to ideas of «social motherhood» and maternalist discourses. It also became a way for women to demand better working conditions and professional recognition, as well as citizenship rights. By contrast, during the 1960s and 1970s, the process of professionalization of social work led to the marginalization of women and the substitution of (female) social workers with (male) community workers.

In examining the Italian case, Marilena Dellavalle highlights the importance of adopting a long-term perspective to the history of women's social work. Her article traces the continuities between the reform policies introduced during the liberal period and the professionalization of social work after World War II. In this respect, women's activism in so-called «practical feminism» at the beginning of the twentieth century, and their mobilization during World War I, were crucial in establishing women's role in social welfare policies and in linking social work to the pursuit of women's citizenship rights. With the rise of Fascism in the 1920s, this strong philanthropic tradition – which led to the organization of factory social services – was incorporated into the regime, along with many female social workers active since the liberal era. Dellavalle's article emphasizes how the experience of the war and, most importantly, of the Resistance, led a new generation of antifascists to view social work as a crucial profession in the rebuilding of Italy after the fall of the Fascist regime. Women's local activism led to new forms of political participation and citizenship, and to a new approach to welfare, in which female social workers were particularly important.

Clarisa Ramos-Feijóo's article examines the specificity of the Spanish case, where social work emerged shortly after the end of the Civil War, in the context of the consolidation of Franco's regime and with a strong influence of the Catholic Church. This case-study highlights the complex relationship that existed between women's organizations on the one hand, and Franco's regime on the other. At the same time, it contributes to a better understanding of the role the Catholic Church and its various associations had in the professionalization of social work. As Ramos-Feijóo points out, the first Spanish school of social work was stablished in 1932 during the Second Republic, and was then incorporated into Franco's dictatorship. While female social workers continued to have an important public role in shaping the regime's social policies, they were forced to operate in a

strongly patriarchal and anti-democratic environment.
The different national cases show the need for a strong comparative historical approach to fully understand the intersections between women's movements, state policies and social work professionalization. The future of research and reflections on gender and social work will focus on the global dimension of social, cultural and human rights.

Elisabetta Bini, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università di Napoli Federico II, Via Nuova Marina 33, 80133 Napoli
elisabetta.bini@unina.it

Elisabetta Vezzosi, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università di Trieste, Androna Campo Marzio 10, 34123 Trieste
vezzosi@units.it

Berteke Waaldijk

Gender and social work

Historical perspectives in times of globalization

Looking back at the histories of gender and social work produced in the past 30 years, I am struck by the fact that feminist histories of social work have interacted with all the big themes in rethinking social work. Critical reflection on disciplining and surveillance of clients[1], re-imagining the role of social work within and beyond welfare states[2] and tracing the transnational inspiration and political activism via networks of social work schools and professional associations[3] would not have been possible without the systematic attention to gender[4] as a category that shapes professionals, clients and the values and ideals of social work. Looking back implies looking at the present and the future. The question that therefore arises is: will histories of gender

[1] G. Mink, *The Lay and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State*, in L. Gordon (ed.), *Women, the State, and Welfare*, Madison (Wis.),University of Wisconsin Press, 1990; G. Lewis, *Race, Gender, Social Welfare. Encounters in a Postcolonial Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000.
[2] L. Gordon, *Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890-1945*, «The Journal of American History», 1991, 2; G. Hauss, D. Schulte (eds.), *Amid Social Contradictions*, cit.
[3] E. Haug, *Critical Reflections on the Emerging Discourse of International Social Work*, «International Social Work», 2005, 2; S. Hering, B. Waaldijk (eds), *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960)*, cit.
[4] Today, the concept of «gender» is not limited to differences between men and women, but addresses a multitude of differentiations connected to assigned gender, sexual identity and sexual orientation.
[5] D.A. Schon, *Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action*, New York, Basic Books, 2000.

and social work continue to play an important role in studies about the nature and future of professional social work?

Is there a future for scholarly analyses on the gender and history of social work? My shortest answers is yes, and my main argument is that understanding about inclusion and exclusion cannot do without critical attention to gender. Historical scholarship on gender and social work has for a long time focused on national contexts. For the present and the future the global context is equally important.

In my eyes the crucial factor is the interaction between feminist histories of social work and historical studies addressing globalization. If histories of gender and women in social work can be inspired by critical studies that go beyond national frames to understand welfare and social support, the future of this field will continue to play its productive role.

Starting where the worker is

I want to start with two texts written by women who did social work and reflected on it, two so-called «reflective practitioners»[5]. When Hannah Arendt left Germany in 1933, she went to Paris, where she worked in the Youth Aliyah, a Zionist organization that assisted Jewish youngsters migrate to Palestine[6].

In 1960 she described what she did:

The children received vocational training and retraining. Sometimes I also smuggled in Polish children. It was regular social work, educational work. There were large camps in the country where the children were prepared for Palestine, where they also had lessons, where they learned farming, where they above all had to gain weight. We had to clothe them from head to foot. We had to cook for them. Above all, we had to get papers for them, we had to deal with the parents – and before everything else we had to get money for them. That was also largely my job. I worked together with French women. That is more or less what we did[7].

This description would also describe social work as it happens today: civil servants employed by host countries to «deal» with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants organizing support networks, volunteers and political activists who support, assist, discipline and supervise migrants in and outside camps all over the world. Whether all these activities should be called «real» or professional social work is not as important as the fact that social work changes character when clients are not seen as national subjects with civil rights and social entitlements, when their existence and their presence is part of the political questions about inclusion and exclusion. This is social work in situations where people have lost the right to have rights.

The second example is more recent, it comes from an article by Mirna Carranza[8], a Canadian social worker who describes the infrastructure that allows her to study

[6] H. Arendt, J. Kohn, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954. Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, New York, Schocken Books, 2005. Retrieved from catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0710/2004059004-t.html, p. 10 (last accessed: August 14, 2018).

[7] *Ibidem.*

the impact of her different perceived identities and belongings relating to her work as an international social worker.

To carry out this intention, I utilise the experiences gained in various projects in the Global South, specifically in Nicaragua […], Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras […], the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica […] and Dominican Republic […]. These projects involved research and development to address violence, sometimes in communities that have been historically excluded and marginalised, such as Black and Amerindian. Each project involved assessing non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government institutions charged with the protection of women and children exposed to violence, particularly those from impoverished groups. This was followed by consultations with community leaders and/or community groups in each country. During this process, it was vital for myself and other researcher team members, both from the Global North and the Global South, to rely on the expertise of their local partners with regard to the local sociopolitical terrain[9].

These two examples illustrate what I wish to examine in this article: the way the context in which social work is carried out has changed from nation states to global, stateless and transnational contexts.

Social work in a globalized world

As historians of social work have argued the field of social work developed in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century alongside the transformation of Western nation states into «welfare states»: countries where the government assumed responsibility for its citizens and invested in education, organizing and funding professionals who translated this responsibility into individual cases; assessing what social support was needed, what was possible. Integration as (gendered) productive and citizens in the nation state was an aim recognized by social workers and their organizations. Feminist proposals to revise such histories from a gendered perspective have also focussed mainly on such national contexts.

Today, in the first decades of the 21st century, the nation state is no longer the self-evident context in which professional work is carried out, and the rhetoric of the welfare state as a modernization/progress narrative has lost its conviction. Globalization has kicked in. Two phenomena, both related to the process of globalization, illustrate this, one is about changing clients, one about changing workers.

First, the stunning number of people: in 2014 the UNCHR pointed out that about 55 million are on the move and live in countries that do not consider them citizens[10]. In countries all over the world asylum seekers, labour migrants, refugees from political and «natural» disasters constitute a population that requires social, material and mental assistance and support. They do not always receive such support. Citizenship, social rights and entitlements

[8] M.E. Carranza, *International Social Work: Silent Testimonies of the Coloniality of Power*, «International Social Work», 2018, 3.
[9] *Ibidem*, p. 343.
[10] UNHCR, Global Trends, 2014, www.unhcr.org/gr14/ (last accessed: August 14, 2018).

are in many countries no longer the 'natural' background for providing social assistance. Social workers deal with clients who are stateless, considered second rate citizens. They sometimes become part of the national infrastructures that include and exclude, differentiate between those who may stay and have some rights, and those who have to leave, whose stay is seen as temporary and who are not entitled to any form of social support. Such distinctions are reminiscent of the old differentiation between deserving and undeserving poor. Critical reflection on the role and responsibility social workers have in such population policies is once again called for, just as it was in Nazi Germany, when social workers contributed to sterilization campaigns of people who were considered unwanted. Feminist historians' analysis of such social work speaks to this topic, and Gisela Bock's studies[11] have not lost any of their relevance.

The second phenomenon is the rise of «international social work». Today, much social work is provided by people working in organizations that are not national: international organizations (often tied to the UN), national and international NGOs community based organizations, religion based organizations and political movements without state support.

These phenomena of globalization indicate that the nation state providing welfare for its citizens can no longer serve as the context for social work. Critical analyses on gender and social work have to move beyond such national frames. I want to use the limited space of this article to discuss two areas of cross fertilization, productive encounters between globalization and gender as critical categories to reflect on social work. I do this in order to keep «gender» visible as a critical category in thinking about social work in a globalized world. This is not self-evident. In the «Journal of International Social Work» the number of 343 references to gender is only half the number of references to human rights. I hope to show that each of these approaches may profit from earlier feminist historical studies of social work. If globalization is the new context of social work, it seems useful to think how histories of gender and social work may be written and read against this background.

Globalization takes different forms, one of them being the rise of transnational concepts and discourses: words and arguments that seem to be universal and have both ardent followers and critics defending local and situated alternatives. I will discuss this by analyzing the way in which the discourse of human rights is becoming an integral part of social work. Equally crucial for understanding social work in a globalized world seems to be a reflection on global differences in power, wealth and privilege. I will address this by asking how postcolonial and decolonial theory and history interact with feminist histories of social work. I will conclude the article with a return to social workers as reflective practitioners.

[11] G. Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus. Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik*, Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986.

Human rights and social work

The focus on human rights as constituting a core value for social workers has been the most visible sign of professional awareness that social workers need a discourse that goes beyond the nation state to anchor their commitment. Human rights are included in the global definition of social work adopted by the IFSW and the IFSSW in 2014[12]. Human rights, and the commitment included in UN conventions ratified by most countries in the world, provide a language that allows social workers to talk about social justice, to connect with political activists in a wide range of communities. Human rights constitute «the lingua franca of global struggles» or a political imagery of global politics.

For historians of gender and social work, the feminist critical study of gender and human rights is crucial. This scholarship traces how women, e.g. Eleanor Roosevelt, and their international networks, that were connected to social work practices, played important roles in the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The interaction between local grassroots feminists and the universal language of rights has contributed to the growth of human rights discourse. Healy, in *Exploring the history of social work as a human rights profession*[13] shows how many social work leaders pioneered in formulating and propagating human rights, but are often not recognized as social workers. Although she does not mention it, her examples (from the US, the UK, Iran, South Africa and Jamaica) are all women. One might explore whether this is more than a coincidence. The historical connection between gender and human rights may be similar to the important role played by women-led social projects in establishing the forms of social support provided by modern welfare states.[14]

Feminist historical work that traces the struggles to include women as bearers of human rights seems to be just as important. Bunch[15] and Peters and Wolper[16] among many others, describe how feminists argued that «women's rights are human rights». The critique of human rights as Western and colonial increased when the discourse of human rights was used and abused in international politics. For those thinking about social work as a «human rights profession»[17], the distinction between human rights as an universalist language of international diplomacy, and

[12] www.ifsw.org/global-definition-of-social-work/.

[13] L. Healy, *Exploring the history of social work as a human rights profession*, «International Social Work», 2008, 6.

[14] D.J. Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State. Performing Charity and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880-1955*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2009. T. Skocpol, *Soldiers, Workers, and Mothers: Gendered Identities in Early U.S. Social Policy*, «Contention», 1993, 3.

[15] C. Bunch, *Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights*, «Human Rights Quarterly», 1990, 4.

[16] J. Peters, A. Wolper, *Women's Rights, Human Rights: International Feminist Perspectives*, New York, Routledge, 1995. Retrieved from catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0646/94015775-d.html (last accessed: August 14, 2018).

[17] L. Healy, *Exploring the History of Social Work as a Human Rights Profession,* «International Social Work», 2008, 6, p. 732.

human rights as a discourse that supports local and regional forms of resistance by different groups and individuals might be helpful. Reilly[18] argues that feminists claiming rights «is central to this conception in which international human rights ideas and standards are subject to an ongoing process of contestation, (re)interpretation, and (re)definition»[19]. For scholars addressing gender in international work, it is crucial to include this critique in their work. Attention to gender justice, through the UN Committee to End Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), plays an important role in social work projects as described by Carranza at the beginning of this article. The study by Merry[20] may serve as an example. *Human rights and gender violence. Translating international law into local justice* describes how transnational programs structure interventions. Merry states that «although activists tailored the programs to some extent, they were largely shaped by an international discourse of feminism and social work. Most of the activists who transplanted programs were connected to an international network that shares ideas through academic and professional research and publications, international conferences, and academic and activist meetings»[21].

According to Merry, the translation of universal concepts is sometimes no more than «window dressing»[22] without a real impact on local expertise and communities' knowledges. According to her, both local activists and service providers report how transnational consensus on human rights provided support for them in their struggles. At the same time, the results of human rights interventions in five different Asian countries did not differ substantially from American approaches. She argues that the language of human rights and global justice is not only a language but also an infrastructure that directs and structures the flows of professional knowledge.

Such work raises important questions for social work, questions that might profit from historical studies of gender and social work projects in the early 20th century. Here too the tension between the ways of thinking of social workers (often middle class women) and the discourse employed by clients (often working class and poor) has been explored. In my previous works, have argued that gender played a role in the introduction of professional skills that demanded respect for the perspectives of clients[23]. The female pioneers of social case work who concluded that professional social workers should «start where the client

[18] N. Reilly, *Cosmopolitan Feminism and Human Rights*, «Hypatia», 2007, 4.
[19] *Ibidem*, p. 185.
[20] S.E. Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence. Translating International Law into Local Justice*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006. Retrieved from bvbr.bib-bvb.de:8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&doc_number=014625611&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA (last accessed: August 14, 2018).
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 20.
[22] *Ibidem*, p. 177.
[25] B. Waaldijk, *Speaking on Behalf of Others: Dutch Social Workers and the Problem of Maternalist Condescension*, in M. van der Klein, R.J. Plant, N. Sanders, L.R. Weintrob (eds.), *Maternalism Reconsidered. Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Press, 2012.

is» searched for a way to acknowledge clients' rights. Today this ideal, just as some forms of feminism, has become part of a universalist approach that informs many international organizations supporting social work in the Global South and new critical work has to be undertaken. I now turn to such scholarship.

Gender, social work and coloniality

The challenge of thinking about social work without falling into Western-based progress narratives that describe non-Western practices as «backward» is the most important challenge for social work professionals of today. And I want to add, for historians of gender and social work more generally. It is very difficult to think about professional standards without describing them as advancing, improving and modernizing. Professionalism, with its infrastructure of publications, journals, schools and associations seems a tanker, hard to change directions. However this is what is needed if one wants to conceptualize social work beyond the «professional imperialism» as described by Midgeley[24].

In a globalized world, critical thinking about race and colonialism constitute the best entry point. Race as a category of analysis in social work has a long history. Gordon has highlighted how «black» and «white» visions of early social work in the US differed[25]. Lewis[26] studied how «race» became part of British social services, while critical studies about the representation of gender recipients[27] all explore connections between race as a category of exclusion and social work. These publications all include systematic references to gender. Gender and social work have also been addressed in histories of colonialism. Historical work on practices of social work in the colonies and in the metropoles include studies of policies aimed at disciplining and «civilizing» projects, involving struggles against «widow burning», eliminating indigenous cultures through schemes of forced adoption in Australia, Canada and many other settler colonies[28], and sexual politics focused on exorcizing «prostitution» and polygamy in colonies[29]. A specific focus on gender was provided by Burton[30] who has analyzed how British white women saw their own role in colonial project as a form

[24] J. Midgley, *Professional Imperialism. Social Work in the Third World*, London, Heinemann., 1981. Retrieved from digitool.hbz-nrw.de:1801/webclient/DeliveryManager?pid=2659245&custom_att_2=simple_viewer (last accessed: August 14, 2018).
[25] L. Gordon, *Black and White Visions of Welfare,* cit.
[26] G. Lewis, *Race, Gender, Social Welfare*, cit.
[27] G. Mink, *The Lay and the Tramp*, cit.*;* A. Hancock, *The Politics of Disgust. The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen,* New York, New York University Press, 2004. Retrieved from public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=865606 (last accessed: August 14, 2018).
[28] M.D. Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race. Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2009. Retrieved from hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.08861 (last accessed: August 14, 2018).
[29] A.L. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1996[2].
[30] A.M. Burton, *Burderns of History. British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865-1915*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

of social support for indigenous women in the British colonies. In my own work, I have pointed to an attitude of custodial citizenship that connects women and social interventions in the metropole to women as advocates of indigenous women, and educators of colonized societies[31]. Spivak's argument[32] that British colonial projects in India were about «white men saving brown women from brown men» might be changed into «white men and women saving brown women from brown men», but it still holds.

Such histories do not focus only on colonial state policies of social intervention (the regulation of prostitution; orphanages and adoption programmes for indigenous children in Canada, Australia), but would include studies of transnational missionary work (churches) and individual projects of saving/adopting individual children. In this respect, such postcolonial scholarship has from the beginning moved beyond the nation state as the context for social policies.

For my own work on the history of gender and social work, the connection between the «invention of the social»[33] and the rise of feminism and women's movements has always been crucial. Denise Riley's analysis of the way the 19th century witnessed the development of «women» as a category in close entanglement with «the social», and the invention of social interventions, helps to understand how social work became a deeply gendered, a female gendered, profession[34]. Knowledge about private spheres was considered a women's prerogative, and thus women's insights became the core of social work professionalism. Whether as objects of social interventions, or as middle management social workers inventing new professional practices. Riley's study radically questions the «universal» category of «women»[35], by adopting a historical perspective, and examines and understands the rise of such concept in connection with new state formations, drawing on Foucault's work on biopolitics. She shows how the invention of a gender binary is crucial for the development of social interventions by the state.

In the past 30 years this line of reasoning has inspired feminist historians of social work to critically explore the link between the gender of social workers and the gender of clients.

The postcolonial and decolonial and anti-racist critique that race is also an axis of exclusion and inclusion, has received less attention in critical histories of social work. In order to understand how this aspect might be explored, a combination of the

[31] B. Waaldijk, *Colonial Constructions of a Dutch Women's Movement: 1898*, in K. Roettger, H. Paul (eds.), *Differenzen in der Geschlechterdifferenz Differences within Gender Studies. Aktuelle Perspektiven der Geschlechterforschung*, Hamburg, Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999.

[32] G.C. Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak*, in C. Nelson, L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Basingstoke, Macmillan Education, 1988.

[33] J. Donzelot, *L'invention du social. Essai sur le déclin des passions politiques*, Paris, Fayard, 1984.

[34] D. Riley, *'The Social', 'Woman', and Sociological Feminism*, in D. Ridley, *Am I that name?». Feminism and the Category of «Women» in History. Language, Discourse, Society*, Basingstoke, MacMillan Press, 1988.

[35] *Ibidem.*

work of Maria Lugones with Riley's might be helpful. Lugones[36] points out that binary gender thinking is also part of a colonial project, not only of European modernization-narratives of the nation state, as Riley argued. Lugones points to connections between anticolonial and anti-imperialist forms of resistence, inspired by non-binary gender practices. She argued that many societies and cultures, for instance in Latin America and Africa, in the Global South, knew and practiced non-binary forms of gender before colonizing projects imposed Western gender patterns upon them.

Histories of gender and social work in globalized contexts cannot do without such reflections. Feminist critiques on the way gender ideologies are connected to the ideologies of welfare state regimes[37] are not sufficient to understand the gender of social work in times of massive globalization. In the contemporary global context, critiques of gender and social work encounter a sometimes paralyzing binary opposition of universal human rights and cultural relativism. Several movements explore possibilities of combining the two. The new 2012 international definition of social work does not only speak about human rights and global justice, but also about respect for indigenous knowledges Understanding the historical links between gender, coloniality and indigenous knowledge is therefore crucial. Research on the ways in which «protecting» and «saving» women and children is deeply connected to imperialist projects of «civilizing» and colonizing, and destroying other forms of knowledge, will help social workers look at their profession in a new critical way.

Pasts and futures of gender and social work history

What does such attention to globalization and transnational discourses (practices) imply for the history of gender and social work? Should one start from scratch and write new histories? I do not think so. The histories of gender and the history of social work have been exciting fields of analysis, because a productive tension was created between new feminist interpretations and existing narratives about social work. Scholars in this field have pointed out that female social workers were often middle and even upper class women trying to discipline working class cultures. However, being sensitized to this interpretation, it also became possible to point out historical variations, differences and locations of resistance. The history of gender and social work has addressed both workers and clients, practices and ideals. Reading against the grain, historians of gender and social work showed that the identification with state interventions was sometimes limited and resulted in feminist political activism and in radical advocacy of social legislation. Feminist researchers discovered that clients' voices could be found and heard

[36] M. Lugones, *The Coloniality of gender*, in W.D. Mignolo, A. Escobar (eds.), *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, London-New York, Routledge, 2010.
[37] J. Adams, T. Padamsee, *Signs and Regimes: Rereading Feminist Work on Welfare States*, «Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society», 2001, 1. L. Gordon, *Women, the State, and Welfare*, cit.
[38] A. Gruda, *Lone Mothers and Welfare Policies in Albania. Conditions, Experiences, Expectations 1944-2013*

and that patterns of resistance could be located.

Such exercises required careful historical studies of location: where did social work (or its predecessors) take place, who invented it, who directed it, whose language was spoken, who paid for it, who profited from it? Starting from national examples and focussing on specific national contexts, many feminist historians of social work have pointed out that state and local governments were not the only actors, that churches and local communities provided social assistance as well[38]. Sometimes these forms of social support were seen by contemporaries, who were inspired by ideals of professionalism, as «old-fashioned», prehistoric[39]. However, feminist historians never followed blindly such a discourse. They understood that modernization could be an argument to exclude women from social work practices. In the search for critical interpretations of gender and social work, they realized that the practices carried out outside the grid of state control and biopolitics might contain alternatives for top-down condescending practices of modern social work.

By starting this article with two examples from women who considered themselves social workers, I want to suggest that «starting where the worker is» might be a good guideline for research on the history of gender and social work in a globalized world. Careful and critical studies of the ways gendered individuals operate in a field shaped by transnational ideologies (human rights, social justice and resistance to such concepts), transnational organizations (transnational NGO's and social movements) and global divisions of power and privilege will continue the critical dialogues about gender between reflective practitioners and critical historians of social work.

Berteke Waaldijk, Graduate Gender Programme, Department of Media and Culture Studies, Utrecht University, Janskerkhof 13, 3512 BR Utrecht (NL)
m.l.waaldijk@uu.nl

: = alleenstaande moeders en sociaal beleid in albanië : Omstandigheden, ervaringen, verwachtingen 1944-2013 / door Available from WorldCat.org, 2005.

[39] A. Boet, B. Waaldijk, '*Start where the client is': Marie Kamphuis and the Professionalization of Dutch Social Work*, in S. Hering, B. Waaldijk (eds.). *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960),* cit.

Carola Togni e Dominique Malatesta

Feminism and the professionalisation of social work: a socio-historical approach through two Swiss examples (1910-1970)

The importance of the role women, in particular of feminist organisations, had in the history of social work has been highlighted by several historical studies[1]. These studies have also emphasised the need to adopt a comparative and transnational approach, in order to understand not only the importance women had in the creation of the first institutions, associations and schools, but also their contribution to the definition of the missions of social work.

This article aims at contributing to this debate through a comparison of the professionalisation process of two distinct occupations in the field of social work in Switzerland, at two different moments in time. We will view professionalisation as a socio-historical process reflecting collective strategies implemented by workers in the field. These strategies will be considered in collaboration or in conflict with other social actors, aimed at achieving recognition for specific missions and thus legitimating the place held in a particular field of intervention and granting value to the work being carried out[2].

Firstly, we shall analyse the impact of the involvement of feminist movements in the process of professionalisation of social work, by examining the creation of the first School of Social Work in French-speaking Switzerland, i.e. at the end of the 1910s. We will then discuss the absence of a feminist influence in the emergence of sociocultural community work in French-speaking Switzerland in the 1960s and 1970s, a process that led to the establishment of a primarily masculine profession. Finally, we shall offer some analyses focused on the comparison of these two processes, as well as thoughts on how the examination of these issues could be furthered.

1910-1920: the professionalisation of social service

At the beginning of the 20th century, in Switzerland as in many other Western countries, the first training institutions in social work were created. Between 1910 and 1918, two schools opened in the German-speaking part of Switzerland and one

[1] S. Herig, B. Waaldijk (eds.), *History of Social Work in Europe (1900-1960)*, cit.; G. Hauss, D. Schulte (eds.), *Amid Social Contradictions*, cit.; B. Bortoli, *I giganti del lavoro sociale*, Trento, Erickson, 2006. D. Rannveig, *Social Work: A History of Gender and Class in the Profession*, «Ephemera», 2012, 3, E. Vezzosi, *L'histoire du travail social sous le regard du genre en Italie: du service social d'usine au travail de communauté*, «Revue suisse de travail social», 2018, 1.

[2] E.C. Hughes, *Le regard sociologique. Essais choisis*, Paris, Ehess, 1996; C. Dubar *et al.*, *Sociologie des professions*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2011.

in the French-speaking region, in Geneva. Philanthropic movements, political authorities as well as bourgeois movements were involved in reforming assistance to the poor, in a post-war context characterised by pauperisation and by intense social conflict[3].

Feminist movements, led by women from the upper classes and close to the bourgeois political parties, actively participated in the implementation of these reforms, notably by supporting the professionalisation of social assistance to the poor[4]. A case in point is the *Alliance des sociétés féminines suisses* (ASF), one of the main feminist organisations of the era[5]. In 1918, more than one third of the thirty members of the committee promoting the creation of the School of Social Work for Women in Geneva were active in feminist groups, including several members of the ASF. The ASF regularly took a position in its journal, *Le Mouvement féministe*, edited by Emilie Gourd, in favour of the creation of the School and of the professionalisation of the social service profession. Among these opinion pieces we find, unsurprisingly, the arguments used by philanthropic movements at the time, which were somewhat critical of the action of volunteer women involved in the field of assistance to the poor. According to this perspective, professionalisation should lead to more effective assistance, particularly by providing education to members of the working class, especially children and their mothers, in the fields of work, hygiene, health, as well as family and sexual morality[6]. However, feminists also promoted another goal, that of providing middle and upper-class women new employment opportunities, in a context in which employment for these women remained frowned upon and access to paid work was limited to a handful of professions[7]. The social work profession, like teaching and nursing, was considered to be appropriate for them, following a series of ideas associated with women as wives, and even more as mothers (e.g., softness, empathy, solicitude, love, abnegation, etc.). The concept of «social motherhood» was used as shorthand for this view, referring to qualities naturally attributed to women in order to stake a claim of their place in the public sphere. These feminists' discourses also demonstrated the desire to give value to «care work» and to contrast, as Ute Gehrard states, a more «human» model to policies considered as «masculine»[8]. As Laura S. Abrams and Laura Curran argue, a detailed analysis of the complex implications of this

[3] V. Boilat *et al.* (eds.), *La valeur du travail. Histoire et histoires des syndicats suisses,* Lausanne, Antipodes, 2006.

[4] S. Matter, *Der Armut auf den Leib rücken. Die Professionalisierung der Sozialen Arbeit in der Schweiz (1900-1960),* Zürich, Chronos, 2011.

[5] The ASF, from its inception, managed to unite rather diverse groups of women, from suffragettes to professional associations of teachers and of midwives, as well as charitable and welfare societies. B. Mesmer, *Staatsbürgerinnen ohne Stimmrecht. Die Politik des schweizerischen Frauenwerbände 1914-1971*, Zurich, Chronos, 2007.

[6] J.P Tabin, A. Frauenfelder, C. Togni, V. Keller, *Temps d'assistance. Le gouvernement des pauvres en Suisse romande depuis la fin du XIXe siècle*, Lausanne, Antipodes, 2010.

[7] C. Schoeni, *Travail féminin: retour à l'ordre!,* Lausanne, Antipodes, 2012.

[8] U. Gerhard, *Concepts et controverses*, in É. Gubin *et al.*, *Le siècle des féminismes*, Paris, De l'Atelier, 2004.

maternalist discourse in social work still must be carried out[9]. When they claimed the right to employment for women, some of these feminists actually distanced themselves, at least in part, from the dominant family model that viewed women only as housewives. Moreover, they fought for professional recognition and good working conditions for women's jobs. Thus, we cannot separate these women's involvement in activities promoting the professionalisation of social work from battles for wage equality, the right to education and employment, and the right to vote.

Within this feminist perspective, social workers were encouraged to pay particular attention to interventions benefitting women, taking into account their specific situations and problems. In the columns of the *Mouvement féministe*, women's low salaries and their lack of professional training were cited among the causes of unemployment and poverty[10]. In this view, social work should devise strategies to deal with these problems. During the economic crisis of the 1930s, whilst women's right to employment was frequently questioned, a social investigator working for the Labour Bureau in Geneva wrote a diploma thesis at the Geneva School of Social Work, under the direction of Professor Emilie Gourd. She stated that the response to female unemployment must involve better professional training for women, as well as «a better conception of the value of women», i.e. one that recognized women's responsibilities and broadened their opportunities for participation[11]. While sharing in a dualist vision of social roles, this feminist discourse affirmed a will to change women's place in society by attributing them more power and better recognition.

1960-1970: the professionalisation of socio-cultural community work

The emergence of socio-cultural community work in French-speaking Switzerland was characterised by the political issue of supervising working-classes' use of leisure time, in particular young men and immigrants[12]. From the 1960s onwards, in the two largest cities in French-speaking Switzerland, Geneva and Lausanne, authorities subsidized community centres that were most often set up by philanthropic associations, Christian youth groups or unions. Public funding made it possible to increase the number of salaried positions within these structures. Women also played an important role and were often involved in the creation of community centres, particularly as volunteers. They were also present within the first salaried teams. However,

[9] L.S. Abrams, L. Curran, *Between Women: Gender and Social Work in Historical Perspective*, cit.
[10] C. Togni, *Le genre du chômage. Assurance chômage et division sexuée du travail en Suisse (1924-1982)*, Lausanne, Antipodes, 2015.
[11] D. Caillat, *Enquête sur les femmes qui ont touché des allocations de chômage cantonales ou fédérales en 1936 à Genève*, Travail de diplôme de l'École d'études sociales de Genève, 1937, 63.
[12] C. Dallera, D. Malatesta, C. Togni, *L'émergence de l'animation socioculturelle sous le regard du genre. L'exemple des centres de loisirs lausannois 1960-1980*, «Revue de la Société suisse de travail social», 23, 2018; S. Cattacin *et al.*, *«Etat incitateur» ou «deuxième ville»: l'animation socioculturelle à Genève*, «Revue Suisse de Science Politique», 1999, 2.

a study specifically focused on the history of the city of Lausanne community centres shows that during the 1960s and 1970s, the professionalisation process relegated women to the margins of the emerging field[13].

In contrast with *social service worker (assistante sociale)*, a term used in the feminine in French from the beginning, the term *socio-cultural community worker* (*animateur socioculturel*) was designated as masculine from the very start. Titles given to the first salaried workers employed in the centres is of interest here. Men, as soon as they were hired, automatically obtained the status of *socio-cultural* community worker, although in most cases they had no specific training in the field of social work. For female employees, titles varied: they were sometimes designated as community workers, but were also called assistants, social carers, or child care workers. These different titles might refer to women's qualifications, but they were mostly indicative of the fact they were primarily hired to take care of children attending the centres. Even before the implementation of a specific course in community work in Lausanne, the status of community worker was granted to salaried men who developed youth activities, especially for teenage boys, while child care work attributed to women was viewed as not (or less) relevant for the «*socio-cultural* community work project» of the centres. These ideas were confirmed during debates about the creation of a community work training programme in Lausanne in 1967. About 15 unionized community workers, all male, were involved in this debate, along with an expert committee named by the city executive government, as well as the city authorities themselves. Women were altogether absent from the debates. First-wave feminists were not involved in the issues surrounding the design of community work education; at the time, they were mostly active in the campaign for women's right to vote at the federal level, obtained in 1971. Second-wave feminism did not manifest itself in French-speaking Switzerland until after this important battle was won; it then mostly focused on other struggles, such as those concerning sexual and reproductive rights[14]. Whilst feminist militants in Geneva later did occupy a community centre in order to promote their claims, no such event took place in Lausanne.

In this context, male community workers, partly supported by expert committees and political authorities, emphasised the distinction between community work and other social work professions, as well as the difference between their profession and forms of expertise viewed as feminine and particularly associated with child care. Community workers described themselves as «promoters and inspirers of activities», «imaginative organisers», «moderators» whose mission was to provide impulses for and organise leisure, sports and/or cultural activities within a community education programme

[13] C. Dallera, D. Malatesta, C. Togni, *L'émergence de l'animation socioculturelle*, cit.

[14] C. Villiger, *Notre ventre, leur loi! Le mouvement de libération des femmes de Genève*, Neuchâtel, Alphil, 2009; S. Meyer, *MLF et Femmes en lutte: le militantisme féministe à Lausanne dans les années 1970*, «L'Emilie: magazine socio-culturelles», 96, 2008.

aimed at an entire neighbourhood's population[15]. Their goal was clearly to demonstrate that *socio-cultural* community work was not «merely» focused on child care, and more broadly to distance themselves from the care dimension of social work[16].

When a professional socio-cultural community work training programme opened its doors in September 1967, the first class was comprised of 15 men and one woman. In the following years, community centres almost exclusively hired men as community workers[17]. These attempted to offer activities to an adult population, but their work continued to focus primarily on youth work, in particular on teenage working-class boys, viewed as high risk for drifting into deviant activities. When girls were present, they were seen by community workers as «the girlfriends of the guys», and the staff did not plan specific activities for them or pay any particular attention to them. Women were also most often present, but as volunteers or in assistant positions that were less well-paid, less stable and usually part-time – mostly focusing on child-care tasks.

Conclusion

As we have argued in this article, feminists' involvement in the process of professionalisation leads to a more important place for women within the profession as well as to a more reflective understanding of the role and mission of social work. First-wave feminists did not restrict themselves to claims for employment opportunities; they also carried forth claims for the recognition and improvement of women's place in society. They deemed that paying attention to women's living conditions and needs (particularly of working-class women) was fundamental and worth fighting for, as was recognising the importance of care work within social policies.

In the case of socio-cultural community work, the absence of a feminist involvement resulted in a masculine mode of professionalisation, and led to the relegation of women to the margins of social work. Through the definition of professional missions, it also relegated care work to the outer reaches of the profession. As Marianne Modak and Laurent Françoise Messant have argued, female connotations of care practices actually discredit women and represent a factor that may devalue their professional identity[18]. Care work is viewed as «dirty work» (in the Hughesian sense) and delegated to female volunteers and assistants, or to a small number of female community workers.

[15] Archives de la ville de Lausanne, *Rapport du groupe de travail mandaté par la Municipalité pour l'étude des centres de loisirs*, juin 1971, pp. 40-41.

[16] The concept of *care*, developed by feminist studies since the 1980s, refers to the mental, emotional and physical work necessary for the welfare of persons within a dependency relationship. A.R. Hochschild, *The Commercialization of Intimate Life. Notes from Home and Work*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2003.

[17] From the 1980s onward, the number of female community workers increases; this is probably due to the extension of programmes for children in community centres.

[18] M. Modak, F. Messant, *Dilemmes et engrenages dans les pratiques de «care»: l'exemple du travail social*, «Revue (petite) enfance», 100, 2009.

We view the place professionals and other actors of social work have allocated to care work within the professionalisation process as a theme that should be further investigated in the context of comparative studies on the history of social work from a gendered perspective. Indeed, this approach provides an opportunity to analyse the construction of social work missions by highlighting issues pertaining to the definition of target populations; it also allows for a focus on modes of intervention, readjustments taking place in the gendered division of labour, as well as on levels of legitimacy and recognition granted to social work professionals.

Carola Togni, University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland (UASWS - HES.SO), Chemin des Abeilles 14, 1010 Lausanne (CH)
carola.togni@eesp.ch

Dominique Malatesta, University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland (UASWS - HES.SO), Chemin des Abeilles 14, 1010 Lausanne (CH)
dominique.malatesta@eesp.ch

Marilena Dellavalle

Gender in Italian social work: a neglected issue

Within the Italian professional community, currently constituting 43,710 social workers, 93.24% is represented by women[1]. Such figures are almost unchanged over time, but have not yet aroused investigations or opened new paths of research on the perspective of gender, except very recently. The issue seems to have been ascribed to a process of natural overlap between family care duties and the professional role[2]. Yet, it is interesting to examine the link that connects demands made by women for citizenship rights and their involvement in welfare activities with the path that led to the birth and development of the profession in Italy.

This article focuses on the secular roots of the profession, which can be traced back to the experiences conducted by organisations of politically active women, as part of political philanthropy in the liberal era and then in the welfare activities implemented by

[1] Consiglio nazionale ordine assistenti sociali. Numbers of members at 30 September 2018, www.cnoas.it/files/000006/00000624.pdf u.a. (last accessed: January 16, 2019).
[2] P. Benvenuti, *Genere*, in *Nuovo Dizionario di servizio sociale*, A. Campanini (a cura di), Roma, Carocci, p. 271.

women in support of the Resistance. This is evidence of the professionalisation and democratisation of welfare, which some of these women were able to transpose into the creation of *new* schools arising after the Liberation and promoted in the context of the Tremezzo Convention (1946)[3].

The persistent opacity of the issue has recently given way to some studies, allowing for a gap to be opened for some questions that could be specifically investigated, from a gendered perspective, on the history of the implementation and development of Italian social work.

Opacity in research and late beginnings

The feminisation of the profession has long been an issue that has been as obvious as it has been neglected. This can be seen from research reports which merely hinted at the female prevalence, without going into the causes and effects on the persons at which the profession is aimed, or on the professionals themselves, or on the organisational system in which the latter operate.

Odille Vallin – an authoritative figure in the establishment of Italian social service – believes that social work is one of the few professions that best meets the needs of women's personality, as women are able to combat male bureaucratic rigidness with their protective instinct[4].

Documentary materials relating to the different parts of the 1st Conference of the National Association of Social Workers of 1948[5] refer to «members» and to social workers, and the questions of the questionnaire relating to research conducted in preparation for the event are all aimed at women. In the internal debate at the National Union of Social Worker Schools, (UNSAS), Prof. Antonio Cazzaniga – Superintendent of the School and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery at the University of Milan – despite believing that «the duty of social work lies primarily with women due to psychological and practical reasons» is willing to accept demonstrations to the contrary if new students show that they are able to work successfully in the field[6]. The UNSAS President denies a preference towards women: while the latter «bring to the profession material and indulgent spirit», men are, in his opinion, used in other fields – not specified, however – of the intervention[7]. This position is not agreed by other representatives of the School, such as Prof. Camillo Toso – INAIL Health Inspector of Turin – for whom social work can only be done by women due to the need for «qualities of sensitivity,

[3] M. Stefani (a cura di), *Le origini del servizio sociale italiano*, Roma, Viella, 2011.
[4] O. Vallin, *L'assistente sociale*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1947.
[5] Associazione nazionale assistenti sociali, *Posizione attuale e responsabilità dell'assistente sociale nell'esercizio e nell'affermazione della professione*, Atti del I Convegno nazionale assistenti sociali Roma 27-30 maggio 1948, Roma, Tipografia Garroni, 1948.
[6] A. Cazzaniga, *Visioni e aspetti dell'assistenza sociale*, in Unsas, *Scuola per assistenti sociali Milano Corso biennale 1948-1949*, Milano, Tipografia INAIL, p. 15.
[7] F. Bargoni, *Prefazione*, in F. Bargoni *et al.* (a cura di), *Il servizio sociale visto dalle insegnanti e dalle Allieve della Scuola Assistenti sociali di Torino*, «Quaderni di cronache economiche», VII, Camera di Commercio, Industria e Agricoltura di Torino, Torino, Tipografia Artale, 1949, p. IX.

psychological intuition and comprehension of the suffering of others, which are often the prerogative of the female heart»[8]. For the Head of the Welfare Office of Fabbrica dell'unione industriali of Turin, the particular propensity provided by female sensitivity and characteristics is taken for granted, even though not all women can adequately exercise the profession, which requires a particular vocation to be integrated with training: «you are born a social worker, you don't become one»[9].

In 1963, Lodovico Montini[10] believed that the profession «which is opening up towards new and more interesting fields of work, requires greater availability of male elements»[11], also in this case without arguing the reasons.

In the first half of the sixties, in parts of the study investigating the insertion of social workers into Lombardy local authorities – which dealt with issues of significant interest, such as professional autonomy, attitudes towards fees-incentives, career possibilities – the gender variable was taken into consideration[12].

In the three-year period 1978-81, a broad piece research analysed, in the initial phase, the employment condition of the social worker in Emilia Romagna, omitting any reference to gender. The second phase (1980-81) – concerning aspects of role, method and inter-professional relationships and relationships with participatory bodies – focused on the gender issue in the final short section of the articulated questionnaire, with two questions on the motivations and effects of female prevalence, although the final report did not include any analysis of these answers[13].

Finally, in the late nineties, a debate opened within the social service community, albeit not equal in intensity and depth to that of other countries: after the initial contributions of Pierangela Benvenuti and Domenica Gristina[14] and of Ottavia Mermoz[15], an expansion was provided in 2000 by Benvenuti and Segatori[16] in relation to the comparative research at European level, and by Fiore which deals with the issue at the margins of the national research conducted by Facchini[17], while more recently

[8] C. Tovo, *Psicologia, Psicotecnica e Assistenza Sociale*, in F. Bargoni *et al.* (a cura di), *Il servizio sociale*, cit., p. 40.

[9] C. Lupi, *Assistenza sociale di fabbrica*, in F. Bargoni *et al.* (a cura di), *Il servizio sociale*, cit. p. 49.

[10] Lodovico Montini (1896-1990), member of the Constituent and a parliamentarian for about twenty years. From 1945 to 1977 he was chairman of the Administration for Italian and International Welfare Activities (AAI) and in that role he dealt with promoting the establishment and qualified development of the Italian social service.

[11] AAI, Servizio studi e assistenza tecnica, *Formazione professionale degli assistenti sociali*, Study prepared for the Council of Europe with the collaboration of the Committee of Directors of Social Service Schools, s.l, 1963.

[12] F. Garzonio Dell'Orto, *L'inserimento degli assistenti sociali negli enti locali. Un'indagine sociologica*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1965.

[13] M. La Rosa (a cura di), *Assistente sociale. Quale futuro? L'indagine empirica*, vol. II, Bologna, Ponte Nuovo, 1983.

[14] P. Benvenuti, D.A. Gristina, La *donna e il servizio sociale. Identità sessuale e professionale dell'assistente sociale*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1998.

[15] O. Mermoz Strobbia, *Maschile femminile neutro*, «Prospettive sociali e Sanitarie», 1999, 1.

[16] P. Benvenuti, R. Segatori, *Professione e genere nel lavoro sociale*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2000, p. 39.

the articulated contribution of Bartholini, Di Rosa, Gucciardo and Rizzuto[18] discusses the issue, based upon a local dimension but subjecting it to different interpretations, including a comparative assessment.

Elements of continuity

The validity of what was stated by Berasaluze Correa[19] in relation to the Spanish context can only be confirmed for the Italian situation, and thus that

> […] one of the elements of the profession that remains and endures over time, one of the most solid and indisputable constants until the point of becoming a constituent of the social service, is the fact that we are faced with one of the few situations created, developed and supported mainly by women.

In fact, the harbingers of the process of professionalisation of the social service can be traced back to the experiences of the early twentieth-century within political philanthropy, an expression of the moderate wing of the women's emancipation movement, known as «practical feminism». In the intentions of those philanthropists, there is a desire to know and to understand social phenomena, to rationalise institutional forms of charity and to introduce coordinated welfare that investigates causes of disadvantage, analyses needs and provides aid, which is considered a right[20]. The experience of the Guidance and Assistance Office[21], established in 1900 by the National Women's Union, with the main aim of facilitating access to public and private charity, through advice and bureaucratic assistance, is of extraordinary anticipatory validity. Within it, information is conceived as a tool of emancipation, in the tortuous path towards acquiring that right of citizenship not entirely feasible for those who, through misinformation, difficulty or incompetence, are unable to access resources.

The Great War saw women's associations engaged in the «extreme attempt to integrate women into the political body through the assumption of a recognised role in the defence of a nation at war»[22]: joining the orientation of European movements and particularly the English suffragettes which led them to convert their pacifistic belief into interventionism and to organise welfare initiatives in favour of soldiers and their families, very soon absorbed by government organisations such as the Civil Assistance and National Propaganda Committees[23]. This experience confirmed, as highlighted by Stefania Bartoloni[24], the attenuation of the reclaiming validity of practical feminism with the progressive increase in service activity: in im-

[17] B. Fiore, *Immagini di genere*, in C. Facchini, *Tra impegno e professione. Gli assistenti sociali come soggetti del welfare*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2010.
[18] I. Bartholini, R.T. Di Rosa, G. Gucciardo, F. Rizzuto, *Genere e servizio sociale*, Torre del Greco, ESA, 2016.
[19] A. Berasaluze Correa, *El devenir del Trabajo Social en clave de género*, «Zerbitzuan. Revista de servicios sociales», 46, 2009, p. 133.
[20] D. Maldini Chiarito, *"Sante laiche": filantropismo, carità e assistenza*, in A. Gigli Marchetti, N. Torcellan (a cura di), *Donna lombarda (1860- 1945)*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1991.
[21] Unione femminile nazionale, *Ufficio Indicazioni e Assistenza*, Milano, Tip. Nazionale Ramperti, 1906.
[22] E. Schiavon, *L'interventismo femminista*, «Passato e Presente», 54, 2001, p. 59.
[23] Cfr. A. Fava, *Assistenza e propaganda nel regime di guerra*, in M. Isnenghi (a cura di), *Operai e contadini nella Grande Guerra*, Bologna, Cappelli, 1982.

plementing social welfare practices, the first seeds of the process of professionalisation of the philanthropic and solidarity action were sown.

Within this path, we find the figure of Paolina Tarugi[25] who transferred the intense commitment in favour of citizenship rights of women into the protection of the weakest citizens, investing in the qualification and accreditation of the social worker profession. Tarugi was, in fact, the initiator of the first path of professionalisation in the field of factory social service, begun with the establishment in 1921 of the Italian Institute for Workers' Welfare. The action of the social worker is aimed at «advocating the interests and rights of workers in the field of social legislation – insurance and social security – and the organisation of welfare […] as well as bringing together those being aided with the competent bodies»[26] and this is of no little importance in a period in which workers' rights were still marked by significant fragility. It was in this context that Tarugi implemented the first experiences of training that she did not abandon even when the fascists of San Gregorio al Celio were absorbed into the School for Social Service and which she continued with the direction of the Milanese school of UNSAS. While the study on the roots of social service within political philanthropy highlighted the dual and intertwined itinerary that saw women engaged in winning citizenship rights and in the implementation of social welfare practices – preparatory to the process of professionalisation of the philanthropic and solidarity action[27], the experience of Paolina Tarugi represents this path in emblematic terms.

Moving forward in time, we meet the women who participated in the Resistance[28] within the Women's Groups for Defence and for Welfare to Volunteers of Freedom which introduced into welfare activities a democratic figure. As stated by Marisa Addario[29]: «Rather than welfare, this was support and it was, for us, a way of participating actively in the fight for Liberation». Protecting and supporting, on the concrete and emotional level, listening – even in the awareness of not being able to respond in resolution terms – sharing, weaving networks of relationships, encouraging the maintenance or reactivation of links, obtaining and transforming resources, finding solutions, were all actions performed by women of the Defence Groups which are then reiterated in the professional work of the social worker[30].

[24] S. Bartoloni, *L'associazionismo femminile nella prima guerra mondiale e la mobilitazione per l'assistenza e la propaganda*, in A. Gigli Marchetti, N. Torcellan (a cura di), *Donna Lombarda*, cit., p. 81.

[25] M. Dellavalle, *Paolina Tarugi. Iniziatrice del servizio sociale*, in M. Stefani (a cura di), *Le origini del servizio sociale italiano*, cit.

[26] P. Tarugi, *Le origini del Servizio sociale di fabbrica in Italia*, «Quaderni di documentazione della rivista bimestrale. L'Assistenza sociale nell'Industria», articoli estratti dai numeri pubblicati nel novembre 1960 e nel gennaio 1961, Confederazione Generale dell'Industria Italiana, Milano, 1961, p. 17.

[27] S. Fargion, *Il Servizio sociale, Storia, temi, dibattiti*, Bari, Laterza, 2009.

[28] A. Bravo, A.M. Buzzone, *In guerra senz'armi. Storie di donne 1940-1945*, Bari, Laterza, 1995.

[29] Engaged in assistance to the political prisoners in the Turin Defence Groups, later a collaborator of Adriano Olivetti in the Community Movement and from 1952 director of the UNSAS School for social workers of Turin. Testimony collected by M. Dellavalle, Turin 14 November 2001.

In the early months after the defeat of Nazi fascism, welfare management at the level of local administrations was also the field in which women sought to affirm their autonomous political presence, within a competitive context in which different concepts of welfare were at play: while the network of welfare initiatives of the Italian Women's Committee was based upon a concept that attributed to welfare the value of charity, but that also positioned it within the Catholic project of conquest of civil society, for women of the Italian Women's Union it was, on the other hand, based upon collective solidarity and represented a lever for individual emancipation[31].

A cornerstone of the regenerating experience of the professional Social Service was the Tremezzo Convention[32], as a moment of high cultural scope for the development of a new approach to social welfare, to oppose fascist paternalism. The protagonists of this event included, in addition to Paolina Tarugi, the anti-fascist Maria Comandini Calogero who founded, with her husband Guido Calogero, the Centre of Professional Education for Social Workers (CEPAS) which stood out for its authority and innovative spirit, under their direction, and later Angela Zucconi with the support of Adriano Olivetti; Lucia Corti Ajmone Marsan, leading personality of the Defence Groups, who covered the role of Deputy Regent of the Italy High Office of the Welfare Ministry after the war and opened in 1946, at the impulse of the Minister Sereni, the School for Social Workers at the Milan Umanitaria[33].

In their experience as founders and/or directors of social service training centres, these women were able to transfuse a democratic orientation of welfare and profession, as emerges from this testimony:

> Only the establishment of professional social welfare schools and the contemporary recognition of the dignity and essential nature of the new profession, was able to mark in Italy the moment of transition from the concept of social welfare seen either as a philanthropic mission with only charity at its service, or, on the other hand, as a bureaucratic and purely administrative operation, to that of social welfare as a modern technique that [...] contributes, with its moral, psychological, and material remedying action of situations of disadvantage and imbalance, to the most rapid and harmonious reconstruction of the country[34].

Of some interest for subsequent investigations is the fact that the action of promotion and representation of the profession took hold within a female aggregation, as testified by the path of foundation of the National Association of Social Workers (1948) which marks a milestone in the process of professionalisation and which was preceded by the National Centre for Social

[30] M. Dellavalle, *Le radici del servizio sociale. L'azione delle donne: dalla filantropia politica all'impegno nella Resistenza*, Torino, Celid, 2008.

[31] A. Rossi Doria, *Le donne sulla scena politica*, in *Storia dell'Italia repubblicana*, vol. I, *La costruzione della democrazia*, Torino, Einaudi, 1994, pp. 799-801.

[32] *Atti del Convegno per Studi di Assistenza Sociale*, Tremezzo 16 settembre-6 ottobre 1946, Roma, Marzorati, 1947.

[33] Testimony of Lucia Corti Ajmone Marsan collected by Marilena Dellavalle, Rome, 23 November 2001.

Workers, founded, in May 1946, within the Italian Federation of Women's Arts, Professions, Business (Fidapa). Its representatives participate in institutive activities of services, in ministerial committees and in international and national study conventions, including those of the Italian Women's Committee and the Italian Women's Union.

Conclusion

As we have seen, in the Italian social service, despite «the driving role and planning took on by the first pioneers and the reformers later […]»[35], the issue of gender has not aroused articulated research works or a fertile debate in terms proportionate to its significance.

Benvenuti and Segatori[36], reporting the results of the comparative research at European level – which investigated, *inter alia*, the issue of similarity between family and professional sphere – note that «Italian social workers have generally manifested intolerance and annoyance, interpreting the possible similarity as a de-qualifying circumstance for the profession». Ottavia Mermoz[37] positions her reflection in the wake of Gabriella Badolato and Pisana Collodi[38] for whom bringing gender identity closer to professional identity risks causing a devaluing short circuit, due to the immediate comparison with the sacrificial maternal model, as well as that of «uncultivated spontaneity».

Involved in this affinity and the consequent annoyance are, therefore, the most closely connoted functions such as aid, which presuppose and involve the relational sphere and which are present almost exclusively in the representation of this profession. Remaining in the shadows, on the other hand, are activities aimed at influencing policies in such terms as to achieve objectives of social justice[39]. These are constitutive functions of the social service, indicated from as early as the work by Mary E. Richmond[40] who considered the social worker to be a faithful witness of the need for reforms, engaged in their actual application and in developing social policies.

In a context in which *policy practices* are considered a «noble» function of the profession, it seems that precisely those experiences that can be found in the folds of professional practice which, within public administrations, had given a voice to the most fragile citizens, soliciting greater attention to the respect of dignity and the rights of individuals, are likely to be obliterated.

In order to question further in this regard and to open paths of research, two periods of the history of our Welfare appear to be particularly intriguing.

The first concerns the twenty-year period in the fifties-sixties in which the profes-

[34] L. Corti, *Introduzione alla III Settimana. I problemi del dopoguerra*, in *Atti del Convegno per Studi di Assistenza Sociale*, cit., p. 516.
[35] S. Bartoloni, *Professioni e modelli femminili nel Novecento*, «Italia contemporanea», 207, 1997.
[36] P. Benvenuti, R. Segatori, *Professione e genere*, cit., p. 39.
[37] O. Mermoz Strobbia, *Maschile femminile neutro*, cit.
[38] G. Badolato, P. Collodi, *Lavoro di cura, esperienza e cultura femminile: scissione e integrazione*, in P. Leonardi (a cura di), *Curare nella differenza*. Milano, Franco Angeli, 1994.

sion spread within public administrations, where – despite the undoubted resistances from the bureaucratic systems of the bodies – the innovative or at least insinuated impetuses cannot be denied: the very introduction of the *case work* method in some way solicited greater attention to the subjectivity of individuals and the need to conciliate reasonable requirements for standardisation with the specific aspects of individual situations. At the same time, experiences of social service of community[41] were conducted with a view to promoting and supporting collective participation.

The second concerns the contestation of 1968 and its impact full of reforms that imposed upon the social service profound self-criticism. The concept of the welfare process was released from its previous more purely individualistic stance, to be inserted within a political and institutional context that values the rights of citizens and the democratisation of structures, as demonstrated by the de-institutionalising practices and forms of collective participation.

Is it possible to trace in these paths the visibility of women as players in those processes or, conversely, are they indistinguishable? This is a question that also relates to the issue of social recognition of the profession, an attribute that for the social service is considered weak or not fully achieved. In that regard, we can conclude by incorporating the question of Roberta Teresa Di Rosa: «is the social service underestimated and less "professional" because it is too feminised or is it feminised because it is less "professional" and therefore more easily assimilated to and combined with other roles […]?»[42]

Marilena Dellavalle, Dipartimento di Culture, Politica e Società, Università di Torino, Campus Luigi Einaudi 3D3 01, Lungo Dora Siena 100 A, 10153 Torino
marilena.dellavalle@unito.it

[39] E. Allegri, *Le rappresentazioni dell'assistente sociale. Il lavoro sociale nel cinema e nella narrativa*, Roma, Carocci, 2006.
[40] M.E. Richmond, *What Is Social Work? An Introductory Description*, New York, Russel Sage, 1922.
[41] Cfr. M. Dellavalle, E. Vezzosi (a cura di), *Immaginare il futuro. Servizio sociale di comunità e community development in Italia (1946-1917)*, Roma, Viella, 2018.
[42] R. Di Rosa, *Identità professionale, genere e servizio sociale in ottica internazionale*, in I. Bartholini, R.T. Di Rosa, G. Gucciardo, F. Rizzuto, *Genere e servizio sociale*, cit., p. 94.

Clarisa Ramos-Feijóo

The history of social work in Spain

Either a female profession or a feminist social work

In the history of social work, it is important to distinguish between two facts: *a)* the profession is practised mostly by women, and *b)* from a feminist point of view, this quantitative evidence might have had, or not, a qualitative effect. Drawing on McPhail, Stephen Hicks argues that although social work is a profession «dominated by women», decision-making roles are in the hands of men[1]. This hierarchy shows that although this is a profession that works for the empowerment of citizens, it still reproduces patriarchal models that mirror the idea of the glass ceiling.

According to Ainhoa Berasaluze, one of the causes of the symbiosis between Social Work and Social Services is to be found in the socialisation of gender, where the «do for others» becomes a priority[2]. This analysis is also shared by Dolors Comas and by Tomasa Báñez, who highlight the progress of the Social Services sphere costing Social Work as a profession, linking (this progress) to the mandates of genre. Again, role distribution becomes a reality in decision-making positions. Both in academia and in professional practice, positions are held by men[3].

Within Spanish society, sexual differences have been perpetuated and have become barriers to the construction of equality. Alicia H. Puleo explains how discursive patriarchal models of differentiation are reproduced. As a result, the history of women's formal integration into the world of employment is linked to subordination[4]. Women's participation in working life is accepted, for instance, to replace the male workforce during wars. This ideological standpoint is reproduced in the so-called «women dominated professions». These are a replica of the tasks that women «naturally» perform in the domestic sphere, as in the case of social workers. So, women are considered more capable in the field of «reproductive» work, leaving the public space and participation in the «productive» work primarily in the hands of men. The dichotomy private versus public is connected to the liberal division that limits women's role to the domestic sphere.

We can observe how the so-called female professions have been and still are func-

[1] B.A. McPhail, *Setting the Record Straight: Social Work is Not a Female-Dominated Profession*, «Social Work», 2004, 2; S. Hicks, *Social work and gender: An argument for practical accounts,* «Qual Soc Work», 2015, 4.

[2] A. Berasaluze Correa, *El devenir del Trabajo Social en clave de género*, «Revista Zerbitzuan», 46, 2009.

[3] D. Comas, *Mujeres, familia y Estado del bienestar*, in T. Del Valle (ed.), *Perspectivas feministas desde la antropología social*, Barcelona, Ariel, 2000; T. Báñez, *El trabajo social como profesión feminizada*, «Revista de Treball Social», 195, 2012.

[4] A.H. Puleo, *Filosofía, género y pensamiento crítico*, Valladolid, Ediciones Universidad de Valladolid, 2000.

tional to the patriarchal model. However, women in the public sphere are recognized thanks to these female professions. Thus, in the history of social work in Spain, even from a submission point of view, a door opens, and many women move from the mandate of home life to the world of public social intervention.

The question to answer is: was it useful to move from the domestic world into the public sphere, in order to consolidate women's professional social work?

Social work in the triad of female professions

A triad of so-called «female professions» – i.e. nursing, instruction and social work – exists in the field of academic education. It happened a process review of the origins, favoured by the presence of male and female feminist teachers in those disciplines. Therefore, this is an important standpoint to reflect on the role they have in the reproduction of gender stereotypes. The reconstruction of the histories of these professions is key to analyse the process of women's empowerment and the target population with which they have traditionally worked and still do.

The debate on the growing consciousness for equal opportunities, and a dialogue for a new understanding of what citizenship is and means is becoming real. These professions are fostering important changes in the conception of the recognition of citizenship, and nowadays in Spanish universities an important research work on the relation between gender differences and situations of inequality is taking place.

The three cited professions are linked to the concept of the care of others, the transmission of life and culture, and in Spanish history they have had a leading role in the process of women's emancipation. The role of teachers during late 19th century and early 20th centuries is of the utmost importance to understand the process of social transformation, as Pilar Ballarín, among others, points out[5]. She explains how the role of the first professional teachers has developed parallel to the creation of the Spanish educational system since 1857. Later, this process was truncated by the triumph of «nacionalcatolicismo» during the Civil War. Then a submissive female role was imposed for 40 years, which was subject to a social and political structure of patriarchal ground, starting from the very school, where a segregated education was enforced.

Regarding nurses, they initially shared the same imprint of domesticity as social workers. A sample of their role of submission can be seen from the following quote, taken from the Spanish version of the *Manual of the Nurse in a Hospital of the French Red Cross*, which was used for the training of nurses in Spain:

> […] the education of the nurse is not built to make false wises, a know-all person, who talks about everything and acts without restraint or reflection […]. The best title is that of assistant to the doctor, […] The more modest they are, the greatest services we get from them, when they have intelligence, skill, discipline and heart. It is wonderful to see how a good nurse that work without speaking, who forgets about herself and thinks only of their

[5] P. Ballarìn, *Maestras, innovación y cambios*, «Arenal. Revista de historia de mujeres», 1999, 1.

sick, […] The doctor provides the means for it; but the nurse applies them with a heart of mother or sister, so sometimes made cures that seem miraculous […].[6]

The emphasis on the silence of the nurse, the «good nurses that work and do not speak», highlights the invisibility of the role of caring, a role that should be assumed from women's submission.

The idea of «forgetting about herself» as a mandate of a caregiver reveals the roles assigned to women socially. The role of the caregiver in a way corresponding to the three professions responds perfectly to the command of domesticity. Briefly, it stands out not for the qualification, but the capacity of acquiescence and act. Anyway, once the National Health System got under way, women were granted a more visible social and academic recognition. Acting with no analysis, nor reflecting upon. This coincidence occurs in the three professions that share the fact of taking the functions from the world of the domestic towards the public one. It will then be necessary to occur the step of feminized professions which have been functional to a patriarchal system in the feminist professions, taking feminism as a theory that advocates for equality.

Social Work in Spain

Social Work in Spain is the heir of a long path that links it to the field of social action and Beneficence. It is noteworthy that responds to a particular context that must be considered by the features that surround it, not equivalent to the surrounding countries, although we share some points[7].

Social work in Spain consolidates professionally (after the Spanish civil war) with a clear presence of the Catholic Church. Many of the first schools were established at the initiative of religious organizations to perform a progressive migration to the public sphere. The presence of the Franco dictatorship in the second half of the 20th century emphasized the ties between the profession and the «nacionalcatolicismo». This leads to a historical line that links the history of Social Work to the Phalanx, the JONS, the Female Section of the Movement and, of course, the Catholic Church. The female Catholic Action was another of the organizations with a clear influence on the consolidation of professional social work within the same ideological line.

Several investigations have highlighted the importance that female organizations of the dictatorial regime of general Franco had to allow for the introduction of feminism. Or, at least, the needed space for many women to start a process of output of the home life to public life. Course, without the objective to respond to an empowerment or feminist vindication. Moreover, as M. Eugenia Fernandez Fraile's research highlights the research, feminism developed in Spain primarily from a more social approach than from the political one, a fact that has par-

[6] F. Cruz Roja, Unión de Mujeres de Francia, *Manual de la enfermera Hospitalaria de la Cruz Roja Francesa*, Madrid, Editorial Espasa Calpe, 1931.

[7] M. Miranda, *De la caridad a la ciencia. Pragmatismo, interaccionismo simbólico y Trabajo Social*, Zaragoza, Mira Editores, 2004; A. Berasaluze Correa, *El devenir del Trabajo Social en clave de género*, cit.

ticular influence on the history of social work[8].

Franco's regime reinforced the stereotypical figure of the «angel of the home», using women's organizations as ideological State apparatuses to indoctrinate women into a role of submission. However, it is possible to find, even within the Franco regime, examples of women who sought to develop a feminist thinking. One of them is María Campo Alange, author of *The secret war of the sexes*, published in 1948. Fernandez Fraile highlights that this book, along with the work of some religious associations' members of the Friendship University, constitutes the groundwork of a progressive Christian feminism[9].

Berasaluze agrees with the idea that social work has been considered as a «semi-profession»[10]. She sees the cause of this categorization on that it is a profession linked to the aid, primarily to most vulnerable sectors of society, so it has always had an appreciation linked to the «social» function of women. But we must not forget in this sense, this mandate goes back to the very origins within the history of social action. Historian Michelle Perrot states: «women must not expect any kind of retribution for this "labour of love"; the care of the City is, as that of the house, free»[11].

The mandate of gender, directly linked to the reproductive work that represent the tasks of care, makes the profession be viewed as one of the powers assigned to the woman. Thus, the definition of social policies or the major guidelines in the field of social intervention remain under an extensive glass ceiling.

With diverse shades, this reality reproduces in the history of Social Work in all countries. It is noteworthy to remember that in the United States, Jessie Taft, PhD from the University of Chicago, did not have access to an academic career, forced to work in a reformatory until 1934. Then, twenty years after his doctorate, she was hired as a professor in the school of Social Work at the University of Pennsylvania. As pointed out by Deegan this is a time when women sociologists had no power in the social sciences, but it was an increasing legitimacy of the social workers as a profession[12]. Thus, the space of social reform had always a female bias.

Natividad de la Red highlights the influence that the Church had in the birth of Social Work in Spain:

The Women's Committee of Social Improvement establishes in Barcelona in 1926. First Congress of Catholic Charity in the country (also in Barcelona) has celebrated in 1929. Both political and social tendencies have attended, allowing, besides the participation of the public Administration and private initiatives, the joint expression of divergent

[8] M.M. Eugenia Fernandez Fraile, *Historia de las mujeres en España: historia de una conquista*, «Revista de Estudios de la Mujer. La Aljaba, segunda época», 12, 2008.
[9] *Ibidem*, p. 15.
[10] A. Berasaluze Correa, *El devenir del Trabajo Social en clave de género*, cit.
[11] G. Duby, M. Perrot (a cura di), *Storia delle donne in Occidente*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2011.
[12] M.J. Deegan, *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School*, New Brunswick, Transaction Press, 1988.

thoughts, from technical, humanistic and religious. These first initiatives of Social Work in Spain reflect an obvious influence of the social Catholicism[13].

The first Spanish school of Social Work was born in Barcelona in 1932 at the behest of Dr. Roviralta, a medical doctor interested in the role of the «workers of hygiene» in the development of the health. At that time Spain is living its II Republic. The School of Social Welfare for the Woman brings an answer to the demand of professionalized staff, following the requirements from the Women's Committee of Social Improvements created in 1926. The first promotion of graduates from this school of Social Service exits in 1934.

The female section of the Falange carried out its work from 1934 and lasted until the end of the Franco dictatorship. Somebody could wonder how it has been possible, through these entities not suspected to be feminist nor to pretend a role of equality between the sexes, to give many women (primarily of popular sectors) the possibility of getting some professionalization from the terms of reference of gender, ancestrally linked to the tasks of reproduction of life. We will respond to this later.

The role played by the Female Section of the movement, and the creation of the Feminine Social Service formed from the experience of the Winter Relief, resulted eventually in a Ministry of Social Welfare of the regime, the Society of the Benevolent dictatorship. Some people referred to it as the «friendly face» of a fierce dictatorship. It is noteworthy for the debate to analyse the characteristics of the process of birth and development of the Social Assistance.

The Winter Relief was born thanks to Mercedes Sanz-Bachiller Izquierdo (Madrid, July 17, 1911), married with Onésimo Redondo, the founder of the JONS. The JONS were the Board of Offensive National-Unionist (JONS) a national-syndicalist group, totalitarian and opposed to democratic freedom and the existence of political groups. JONS supported the supremacy of the State, articulated around a vertical trade union movement. The ideology of the so-called *nacionalisindicalismo* or *falangismo* was born there. The Social Assistance was is born firstly as a Winter Relief. This charitable organization was created following the structure of the Winterhilfe of German Nazism. It started as a dining room to meet the deficiencies arising in the areas of conflict during the Spanish civil war, but in 1939 had reached the number of 2,487 dining rooms and 3,000 service centres. Pedro Carasa says the Social Relief has marked undoubtedly the origin of Social Work in Spain[14]. This responds to the needs of the less fortunate social sectors bringing the idea of social action, at zero cost, based on the work of the women who had to meet the social service.

It seems important to analyse the institution of a Social Relief. Primarily because its founder, Mercedes Sanz Bachiller, very

[13] C. Rubi, *Introduccion al Trabajo Social*, *La Llar del Llibre*, quoted in N. De la Red, *Aproximaciones al Trabajo Social*, Barcelona, Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1993, p. 54.
[14] P. Carasa, *La revolución nacional-asistencial durante el primer franquismo (1936-1940)*, «Historia Contemporánea», 16, 1997.

close to the ideology of the Franco regime, was not always well recognized from their own ranks. It was said of her that she had ambitions of power, because of her confrontation with Pilar Primo de Rivera. Moreover, after becoming the widow of Onésimo Redondo, she married to her collaborator, Javier Martínez de Bedoya, who also turned out to be so critical to the figure of Primo de Rivera. Although her work that later resulted in the Social Relief, an exaltation of the «benevolence of the regime», not few were those who saw there an entity promoting vagrancy and begging. This view is noteworthy because her activity got criticism, although a woman of the regime. Thus, we understand that mandates of gender entail the critique of the patriarchal model, as long as they are developed away from the model of reproductive work in the realm of the private, the domestic. Her obituary, published by a conservative Spanish newspaper reflects this view:

For some, it was absurd her commitment for mitigating the suffering of the defeated, who deserved their punishment; for others, it was unfortunate that it did not require acts of contrition before feeding and clothing those knocking at the doors of the Winter Relief. Even churchmen censored her work. They found conflicts with the demands of charity, understood as a private virtue; anyone could see here a resistance to share the field of charities with a secular organization. It was spread even the suspicion that she only aspired to increase her prestige and power. Given its rivalry with Pilar Primo de Rivera and that her second husband, Martínez de Bedoya, was very critical of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera in 1935, Mercedes Sanz-Bachiller would see her name obscured in the annals of Falange Española de las JONS, which would claim the paternity of the Winter Relief, the base of Social Relief. Hers was not a path of roses.[15]

One would think, among other matters that «hers was not a path of roses», because she was a woman; and because she has converted that role of «angel of the home» of fascism in an intervention profile closer to a role of productive labour, a fact which of course was not well seen by the highest positions in the Government. As for the republican side, several forms of social care that had a female presence were also constituted. Before the insurrection of Francisco Franco (July 18, 1936), the role of women has started to develop during the Second Republic (since April 14, 1931). Three female deputies (and 470 male deputies) were in the Constituent Cortes. These deputies were Margarita Nelken, Victoria Kent and Clara Campoamor. It follows a quote from a book of Margarita Nelken published for the first time in 1918. This passage is very illustrative of the role assigned to the woman:

There is a field of activity, not haggled to the woman: the beneficence. Here, even the most diehard professed anti-feminists believe that the woman just take care of charity, and until they regent at his whim. So we see all over meals of ladies, Board of ladies, Female Councils. Therefore, the charity is the best touchstone for the ability of feminism. A woman, who knows to organize and manage a large

[15] M. Penella, «ABC», October 13, 2007.

charity, most likely knows how to intervene even in municipal affairs; and although the details are diverse among themselves, the charities of a country give quite fairly the standard of the general spirit that socially animates the women of that country. What is the general spirit that emerges from the welfare in Spain? The response shows obvious and unambiguous: the more antisocial spirit that may occur. Charities in Spain did not only lack the required modern social meaning, but are contrary in all[16].

Nelken advocated a change in the perception of the charity work, as she saw them linked to a classist and patriarchal idea, aiding vulnerable people. Nelken raised the rancour of right-winged people because of their Jewish origins. When she publishes the Social Condition of Women in Spain (cite above comes from this book), she generates a real scandal among his detractors. Nelken, as a member of parliament, was contrary to the female vote, based on the subordination that the Spanish women had to their confessors, so it would lead to a consolidation of the right-wing parties through the ballot box.

The Second Republic was a project of change and modernization of Spanish society. Unfortunately, it was truncated by the beginning the civil war and the resulting fascist dictatorship for the following four decades. Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a progressive incorporation of women to the labour market led to situations of inequality. This situation was highlighted in the speeches of intellectual women such as Emilia Pardo Bazán, or Concepción Arenal who is considered as the precursor of Social Work in Spain, and she distinguishes for her work in prisons.

Conclusion

The consolidation of the profession of Social Work in Spain has gone hand-in-hand with the movements of women emancipation which originated from feminist theories. In a society defined by patriarchal structures and ideology, such as Franco's regime, women found necessary to find a way to participate in the public sphere by using the frame of the so-called feminine professions. The process of indoctrination developed during Franco's regime, by considering being a woman necessary to perform successfully the three female professions par excellence, nursing, instruction and social work helped (without intending it) women to step into public life. As Mary Nash suggests, mobilization of female during the Civil War started a path of openness in which the woman gradually could move from the private sphere towards the public life, by projecting the maternal-familiar role to the public space[17].

The Spanish Transition witnessed how feminists broke through by intervening directly on issues related to free sexuality, the decriminalization of adultery, legalization of contraceptives, the right to abortion, and divorce.

[16] M. Nelken, *La condición social de la mujer en España*, Madrid, CVS, 1975 [1918].
[17] M. Nash, *Rojas. Las mujeres republicanas en la guerra civil*, Madrid, Grupo Santillana de Ediciones, 1999, pp. 212-213.

As Nash argues, the feminist movement demanded political amnesty also for women condemned by «feminine crimes» from Francoist legislation (adultery, abortion and prostitution)[18]. Social intervention was nourished by political demands and the struggle for a more democratic society. Feminist organizations were only legalized in 1978 and feminist movement received facilities owned the Women's Section.

Female Social Service was abolished. Moreno Seco affirms that the transition cannot be explained without the presence of the feminist movement within the fight against the dictatorship[19]. It is noteworthy they have promoted a renewal of the concept of citizenship by requiring equality between men and women.

My point is that, the professionalization of social workers during the 20th century was instrumental to help women to step into public life. Nonetheless, the inclusion of Social Work as an academic discipline has promoted a new challenge; the danger is that of being obliged to merge with other disciplines which boast a longer history in the academy. Moreover, the organization of the system of Social Services can be tricky for the professional ethos, as it tends to focus more to urgency and management, than discussing on the causes of social problems and defining social policies, a field of enquiry which is mostly controlled by sociologists.

Scholars such as B. Agrela Romero, C. Gutiérrez, Casal and T. Fernández Contreras have researched on the importance of including a reflection of gender in the intervention to respond, from to social problems from a professional ethics[20]. As F. Idareta Goldaracena, and Ballestero Izquierdo muse, the perspective of ethical reflection requires analysing the reality of gender and its impact in our profession[21].

I argue that a renewed social intervention which englobes the principles of equality and citizenship may arise only from deeper studies and analysis. The way social work can address feminist theories in both professional practice and academic discourse is still a pending issue. Many of the practices of social intervention continue to depend on patriarchal structures and ideology. The social work in Spain has not adopted fully a feminist stand; in my opinion, this is still a work in progress. An in-depth discussion about the academic training to fully incorporate gender in our field is necessary. This has to be carried out not as a mere question of affirmation, but must be addressed more deeply within the epistemological and ethical debate. Nowadays, the patriarchal model is not yet called definitely into question; for example, even in such a sensitive issue as gender-based violence, some still

[18] M. Nash (ed.), *Feminidades y masculinidades: arquetipos y prácticas de género*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2014, pp. 189-216.

[19] M. Moreno Seco, *Feministas y ciudadanas. Aportaciones del feminismo español a la construcción del estado democrático*, «Revista Alcores», 13, 2012.

[20] B. Agrela Romero, C. Gutiérrez Casal, T. Fernández Contreras, *Repensar la ética en Trabajo Social desde una perspectiva de género*, «Cuadernos de Trabajo Social», 2017, 1.

[21] F. Idareta Goldaracena, A. Ballestero Izquierdo, *Ética, paternalismo y burocracia en Trabajo Social. Portularia*, «Revista de Trabajo Social», 2013, 1.

claim for a system that foster the re-victimization of women.

An innovative theoretical stand in the field of the Spanish social work, and the subsequent consolidation of the public system of Social Services, require a reflection which relies on feminist theory. My idea is that some issues to be considered and analyzed should be: 1) to which extent the historical process of Spanish social work has fostered a professional profile based on gender stereotypes, and the resulting invisibility of a feminist definition of the profession? 2) to what extent the lack of a strong support to a feminist research in social work, is not determined by the performance of a contract of gender that penetrates into the roots of the social intervention and the professional organization; 3) up to which extent the crisis of care which Spanish society faces due to the prolongation of the life expectancy, presents social workers as mere managers of resources, and prevent a deeper reflection on epistemological and ethical issues. This approach requires more research and a deeper debate.

Clarisa Ramos-Feijóo, Istituto Universitario de Investigación de Estudios de Género Universidad de Alicante, Careta San Vicente s/n, 03690 San Vicente del Raspeig (E)
clarisa.ramos@ua.es