

Italian Occupational Nomenclature

Research Thesis

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with research distinction in the  
undergraduate colleges of The Ohio State University

by

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April 2017

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the social and linguistic significance of gendered occupational nouns in Italian. The history of feminism in Italy is important in understanding the effort it took for women to have the rights, in particular the workplace rights, that they have today. Examining nouns used to refer to women in certain occupations reflects this movement and the rate of its evolution. Some occupational nouns have variant forms, one or two that mark the female gender and one that marks the masculine but is used for males and females in the occupation. This is true particularly for nouns referring to high-ranking positions traditionally held by men and only more recently held by women. This variation is significant because it means that these nouns are currently undergoing a change. In order to examine this change in progress, I conducted a study wherein participants completed a questionnaire of sentence completions which required a gendered occupational noun. The results demonstrated that in every noun displaying variation, women always chose a feminine form whereas men almost always chose the masculine form to refer to females in the profession. This suggests that women are not content with the application of masculine nomenclature to their occupations, and possibly reflects their continued discomfort with gender inequality as well as the association of masculinity with positions of power. This study shows that language is not the only thing changing; Italian society is adapting to a modern world where women can and should occupy high-ranking positions in all labor sectors. Language change, like social change for women in Italy, is slow and it appears that women may be spearheading this linguistic change in order to claim their feminine identity both in society and in the workplace.

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## **I. Introduction**

This paper discusses the social and linguistic significance of occupational nouns in Italian. The discussion begins by exploring Italian Feminism from its beginnings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the modern day. Women's current social situation is then discussed in further detail, and in section I.c: Workforce Data Comparisons, statistics concerning women's rights are compared between Italy, the United States, and some European Union Countries in order to put into perspective Italian women's position. In the second section, occupational nomenclature is introduced, beginning with the prescriptive rules for the use of these nouns. Then, the format and results of the study on the use of occupational nomenclature are discussed. Lastly, the implications of the study's results are discussed and connected to the feminist movement in Italy.

## **II. Feminism in Italy**

The struggle for women's rights in Italy has been long and difficult. In this section, the journey of women's fight for equality is outlined, from the birth of feminism to today. Women's current social situation is discussed to emphasize how far women's rights have come, but also to show that inequalities still exist. Italy's gender workforce statistics are examined, and then compared to other countries in order to put Italian women's situation into perspective.

### **A. Origins and development**

Feminism, as defined by the Encyclopedia *Treccani*<sup>1</sup>, is the movement to reclaim economic, civil, and political rights of women; in a more general sense, the combination of theories that

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia Treccani is an Italian language Encyclopedia written by linguists covering all topics from science to art to language. Since most Treccani articles do not cite an author, each source will be cited in

criticize the traditional condition of women and propose new relations between the genders in the private sector and a different social position in the public sector. Feminism in Italy has had an interesting, though difficult path, which has spanned centuries. The first phases of feminism in Italy began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as a reaction to misogynistic culture, but feminism as a movement didn't really begin until the period of industrialization, when feminist ideology was sweeping throughout most of Europe. December 1880 saw the beginning of the feminist movement in politics with the creation of the *Lega Promotrice degli Interessi Femminili* (League for the Promotion of Women's Interests) by Anna Maria Mozzoni and Paolina Schiff. However, the word feminism wasn't introduced into Italian vocabulary until the 1890s (Malagrecia, 2006:71 & Willson, 2010: 24). During this time, Mozzoni was known for her opposition to unfair family laws, and believed that women should have been considered in their relationship with society and not only in the family.<sup>2</sup> She wanted women to be more integrated into society through education and work, and strongly believed that women should have the right to divorce (Malagrecia, 2006:71).

Anna Kuliscioff was another famous promoter of women's rights in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. She was a Jewish woman living in Italy, was separated from a political writer and the father of her child, and she earned a medical degree in gynecology, which she used to treat women who had suffered from domestic violence and poverty in Milan (Malagrecia, 2006:72). She was also friends with the head of the Socialist party at the time, and critiqued the feminist issues within the party.<sup>3</sup> She later became the first woman to lecture at a university in Milan (Malagrecia, 2006:72).

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the following format: (Encyclopedia Treccani, Title). The link to each article will be given in the footnotes. <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/femminismo/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/femminismo/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/femminismo/>

During the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many periodicals and women's organizations were founded, such as the *Associazione per la Donna* (Women's Association) and the *Unione Femminile Nazionale* (National Women's Union). Organizations such as these campaigned for women's rights, but did not yet have the political or social power to change laws (Willson, 2010:27-31).

In this same decade, there were catholic feminists who opposed the views of feminists like Mozzoni. These women upheld views of the Church by reinforcing the idea of women as mothers whose purpose was to raise catholic children. The Church used women to help stave off rising atheism, by ensuring that Christian values were taught in the home. As a result, women gained new duties, but not more rights (Willson, 2010:33).

Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women were not allowed to vote, and this was undoubtedly due to sexism. People argued against giving women the vote for ridiculous reasons, such as the belief that they would vote the same as their husbands, giving men an extra vote; that if women voted differently than their husbands, it would cause domestic problems; that women couldn't handle politics; and that allowing women to go to the polls would result in unacceptable mingling of the sexes (Willson, 2010:38). In the first years of the 1900s, the feminist movement saw successes like the creation of organizations, but it was still unable to garner a large following since both the Church and science were still teaching female inferiority, so these organizations couldn't achieve any law reforms.

The first World War saw a large amount of improvement for women's rights, although there were, of course, many negative effects of the war. Women became impoverished if they were widowed and for the poor, hunger and disease continued to be prevalent. However, as in other countries, the war caused middle-class women to work in jobs outside of traditional

domestic work, like factories, farming, and nursing for the Red Cross. Lower class women worked anyway, so this change was only noted among the middle and upper classes. After the war, however, the situation worsened again, when women were fired from their jobs to allow for the return of men and the media began to vilify women by accusing them of stealing men's jobs and only using their earnings for irresponsible spending on personal items. By 1919, in accordance with a new law, women were allowed to practice all occupations (except for diplomatic positions and police work, among others) and be publicly employed, but this was generally seen as a reward for working during the war (Willson, 2010:55-60).

Fascism took hold in Italy in 1922, when Benito Mussolini became Prime Minister, and this political change caused the issue of feminism and women's rights to be all but eliminated from social view. Indeed, fascism "excluded women from political life" and instead pushed the idea that a woman's duty was at home (Malagrecia, 2006:75). During this time, feminists moved to fascist ideology relatively easily because of the intense patriotism of the post-World War I years. However, the increase of women moving to Fascism was for socio-economic class purposes; they didn't become Fascists with women's rights concerns in mind. Their new party may not have been a champion of women's rights, but other political parties at the time didn't offer any improvement for women either (Willson, 2010:83).

In 1925, in a move uncharacteristic of Mussolini's government, suffrage was given to very select groups of women, which included some women over the age of 25, war widows, women who had war honors, and women who were literate and who paid 100 lire in taxes every year. Additionally, these women had to request their enrollment in electoral lists in order to vote. Mussolini supported this law, but he continuously demonstrated his own opinions about women and consistently portrayed feminism as old fashioned and no longer relevant. The feminists who

did move to the Fascist party were mostly moderates and conservatives, who ultimately persuaded other women and young girls to join the party using propaganda. They were given special incentives such as education at special party-run schools, including The Orvieto Academy which trained women in sports and physical education (Willson, 2010:84-85, 93).

Fascist propaganda pushed the idea of the “prolific mother,” whose job it was to bear as many children as possible to create a generation of loyal soldiers. The government even began to implement taxes against bachelors in order to encourage men to marry and procreate. There were prizes and ceremonies to celebrate prolific mothers. Women who opposed this view would secretly use birth control and become activists or informants. Mussolini even launched a campaign shaming women who did not have motherly curves. This campaign, ironically, served to reinforce the importance of women to the regime.

Unsurprisingly, the Mussolini government didn't want women to work, as its members believed that working would distract women from their domestic duties. They pushed the idea that work was dangerous for women and could even result in sterility. Women were only allowed to work for specific financial reasons, and even then, the Fascist Party wanted to make sure that women only worked in acceptable female occupations, resulting in the foundation of three women's colleges in Rome. These colleges trained women to be teachers and social workers, the goal of which was to keep women in female occupations. Although the government dismissed feminism as an individualist ideology which was no longer important under fascism and tried to prevent women from working as much as possible, women continued to be employed, and more women began to receive an education (Willson, 2010:61-76).

During World War II, women were able to take on new roles and responsibilities in society, especially as war aides and in the home. With many men away at war, women had to



assume duties like working and managing finances, and making important decisions like immigrating. After the war ended and Mussolini and the Fascists were no longer in power, women made many strides toward equality (Willson, 2010:111). The women's movement of this time "justified itself by the entire society's need to be redeemed and protected from the threats men had unleashed in the form of war, totalitarianism, and anti-democratic agitation" (Tambor, 2014:2). This justification would be the foundation of many of the movement's achievements in the following decades.

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1945, all women won the right to vote, but soon thereafter in 1948, the Christian Democrats won the elections and the Left was pushed out of the government (Malagrecia, 2006:78). According to Yasmine Ergas (1982), "the complex system of alliances constructed by the Christian Democrats effectively worked against the realization of equality for women," which led to slower progress of the feminist movement. During this post-war period, illiteracy among women dropped from 15.2% to 3.8%, and the number of women in higher education increased. Unfortunately, women were still faced with workplace prejudice and were often relegated to 'feminine' occupations. Indeed, teaching was still the most common female profession. In 1948, for the first time, there were forty-five women elected to Italian Parliament. They were subject to much scrutiny about their personal lives, and held to a double standard concerning marriage and sexuality. A young, unmarried political woman was seen as promiscuous, though there was no problem with a promiscuous male politician. Indeed, a woman's marital status influenced the public's perception of her fitness for political positions while there was no such prejudice for men. These women were subject to all this scrutiny even though thirty-five of them had advanced degrees and were more than qualified for their positions (Tambor, 2014:49-51, 55).

In 1950, new maternity laws were put into place. They offered extended leave and stipulated that women couldn't be fired for an entire year after giving birth. However, this discouraged companies from hiring married women, and so working women continued to be a minority. From 1951 to 1971, housewives continued to outnumber women who worked. One reason for this is that being a housewife was seen as comfortable and stable work in post-war Italy (Willson, 2010:117-121).

The post-war era also saw a split in the political left. The communist and socialist parties both tried to promote women's rights, but to varying degrees of success. The communists supported women in the role of a good mother, but also as a good worker. The party attempted to promote equality, but fell short in the form of their double-standard view on men and women's sex lives, and their views on divorce and birth control. The socialists, on the other hand, wanted women to work with men to achieve equality and fight for their rights, but did not care to examine details of the situation. However, the socialists were able to reform prostitution laws in 1958, and later proposed divorce bills in 1958 and 1965 (Willson, 2010:132).

The Italian Women's Union (*Unione Donne Italiane*) was founded in 1944 and saw high membership between the mid-1940s and mid-1960s. During the height of its popularity, it fought for equal pay, more nurseries, and better work conditions for women, but around the mid-1960s, their membership began to decline (Willson, 2010:140). The post-war era also brought an increase in the number of women in Parliament, but the majority of them were in the Chamber of Deputies, rather than the Senate. These relatively high numbers of women in Parliament lasted from 1946 to 1979, but these are only relatively high numbers because even in 1979 they didn't break 10% of the population of the Chamber of Deputies. Such an environment happened for two reasons: one, the parties tended not to choose women as their candidates and two, some women

voters even thought that men made better politicians and were better able to do their job (Willson, 2010:144-145).

The 1950s saw some important legislative changes in Italy. In 1958, brothels were banned, pimping and the trafficking of women were criminalized, although prostitution was not. Under these new laws, however, prostitutes could not be registered or inspected by the government, making Italy one of the last countries in Europe to end government involvement in prostitution. In 1959, women were allowed to collaborate with the police force, but only in situations that were considered pertinent to women in issues concerning morality, children, or other women, but they were still not allowed to be officers (Willson, 2010:147).

Although faced with some political barriers, the late 1960s and the 1970s brought some successes for the movement. There was an increase in the concern about mistreatment, violence, and rape enacted against women, and many legislative reforms gave women more rights. In 1963, women gained rights as an equal parent in certain family and business matters, and that same year women became free to hold all public offices (Malagrecia, 2006:81). They also banded together to make family planning clinics and improvements to labor rights for women, which included improvements to maternity leave and equal pay clauses.

The student movement of 1968 attracted feminists. During this time, foreign texts on feminism, like *The Feminine Mystique* and *The Second Sex* were the basis of ideology. One key characteristic of Italian feminism was the focus on the differences between men and women, and the idea that women deserved their own identity, and should not be relegated to the man's "other."

In the 1970s, the feminist movement became much more "focused on themes, ranging from women's control over their sexuality and reproductive functions to the distribution of power

in the family” (Ergas, 1982). Malagrecia (2006) agrees, asserting that the movement began to distinguish between gender as a social identity and sex as a biological foundation, the goal of which was to highlight the systematic discrimination of women.

In December of 1970, the Parliament ruled in favor of divorce, although it was only allowed after a separation of five years (Malagrecia, 2006:81 & Willson, 2010:158).<sup>4</sup> Maternity leave was extended and anti-contraception laws were repealed in 1971. In 1975, family health clinics were established throughout Italy and the Civil Code was rewritten. The new Civil Code was a very significant milestone for the movement. It legally declared that women and men were equals in marriage, that men were not automatically the heads of a family, women were no longer required to take their husband’s name upon marriage, women could obtain passports without their husband’s consent, and dowries were outlawed. Additionally, property became shared by spouses and both parents were responsible for making decisions about their children (Willson, 2010:159).

Workplace discrimination, which has long been an issue in Italy, was finally outlawed in 1977. However, the degree to which this law was enforced was negligible. When a woman filed a discrimination suit against a company, usually the only compensation was to get the job back, which didn’t necessarily fix the discrimination issue. The failure to enforce this law later led to the development of the *Comitato Nazionale per l’attuazione dei principi di parità di trattamento ed uguaglianza di opportunità tra lavoratori e lavoratrici* (Equal Status Committee) in 1983 (McBride et al. 1995:154). The same year, paternity leave was introduced into law, but few took advantage of it.

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<sup>4</sup> Today, the law is different. Couples who agree to divorce must wait three years, but couples not agreeing to divorce have to wait for five years after someone is declared at fault.  
<https://www.justlanded.com/english/Italy/Articles/Visas-Permits/Marriage-Divorce-in-Italy>

In 1978, a law was passed allowing abortion only in cases where a woman's physical or mental health was in jeopardy, or if the fetus was unhealthy. It also stipulated that the abortion was to be performed in the first 90 days, and the circumstances of conception had to be taken into account before the procedure. If a woman was under the age of 18, she had to have her parents' permission to have the abortion. It was also required that a woman wait for seven days in order to reflect on the decision before the procedure. Additionally, doctors could register as "conscientious objectors" which greatly reduced the number of doctors willing to perform an abortion safely. This law was not exactly what the movement wanted, but it was the result of compromise between political parties. At the very least it was a big step in the right direction. (Willson, 2010:162).

Other improvements for women's lives were made regarding ideas about rape. The first rape crisis center opened in Rome in 1977, and in 1981, a law on sexual violence was finally adopted. Men could no longer plead that they were honorable in order to secure a shorter sentence and reparatory marriage (when a rapist's actions were forgiven if he married his victim) was outlawed (Willson, 2010:163).

Unfortunately, the late 1970s saw a period of decline for the feminist movement. Many women felt disillusioned and insignificant within groups because of the lack of organization. The movement at this time was also guilty of failing to accept diversity. It was not inclusive of all ages, as it was led by young women who were not concerned about, for example, the health issues suffered by older generations. They were also not very focused issues concerning mothers and maternity in general (Willson, 2010:164). This period from 1968 to 1987 also saw a decline in the number of women in Parliament, likely for these same reasons (Tambor, 2014:180).

During the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the focus shifted more toward diversity. Women's studies became a topic sought by students, though it was not yet officially taught in universities. There was also a huge lesbian women's movement, which aimed to create a lesbian identity separate from the gay movement. By 1986, there were 100 women's cultural centers established around the nation, where women could be educated or receive services. (Willson, 2010:169).

In the 1980s, women became more visible in political parties, both as members and as politicians. Women were allowed to join the state police in 1981. In 1984, Bettino Craxi established the *Commissione Nazionale per la Parità e le Pari Opportunità* (Equal Status and Equal Opportunity National Commission), which was responsible for everything about women's rights except labor issues. As mentioned above, the year prior, the Equal Status Committee was created specifically for labor issues, and is connected to the Ministry of Labor. However, neither of these equality agencies could support women's movements at the national or local levels because they didn't have the funds. The Equal Status and Equal Opportunity National Commission, although unable to directly support women's movements financially, was essential in the distribution of information to women about their rights, while the Equal Status Committee was able to help form legislation which increased Italian women's rights (McBride et al. 1995:151-155, 163-166). In 1988, the nursery system was expanded, allowing women with young children to return to work more quickly and preventing women from being undesirably stuck at home until children go to school.

Throughout both the 1980s and 1990s, there were many migrant women in Italy, a result of Italy's booming economy. However, these women were subject to sexism and racism. Migrant women were always relegated to domestic work, even if they were well educated. There were

even women acting as madams, who would recruit migrant women to enter into prostitution (Willson, 2010:180). This would seem to be the antithesis of the feminist movement. It is appalling that a woman would essentially enslave another woman in order to make money.

In 1991, the Affirmative Action Act was finally adopted, which allowed for better ways to guarantee equality in the workplace (McBride et al. 1995:157). In 1993, there was a law which established quotas to regulate the number of women in government, forcing parties to list candidates in alternate order by sex for the Chamber of Deputies. According to Hausman & Sauer (2007:178), the quotas caused a divide in the women's movement, wherein some felt that they were helpful, and others thought that the quotas were admitting female inferiority. This was later declared illegal in 1995, but it did cause almost a 7 percent increase in the number of women elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1994 (Willson, 2010:171).

In the 1990s, feminism took yet another hit, because Silvio Berlusconi and some right-wing women (like Irene Pivetti) denounced feminism and wanted to strengthen antiquated ideals of femininity and women's place in society. However, this did not stop women from entering politics. In 1996, there were 4.3 percent more women in the Senate than there were in 1983, and this number rose to 14 percent by 2006 (Willson, 2010:171). Although these numbers are very low, the general increase should give hope to current and future generations wishing to have their voices heard in government. 1996 was also the year in which rape was officially criminalized and statutory rape could be prosecuted.

The 1990s also saw a huge increase in education for women. In 1990, there was a women's study center established at Turin University (McBride et al. 1995:163). Girls overtook boys in education so much so that in 1992, over half of university students were women. However, this educational superiority was not reflected in the job markets. Women received

about 75 percent of male earnings in most jobs, but in leadership or managerial positions they received only 56 percent of male earnings (Willson, 2010:174). Clearly, women's work was not as valuable as men's.<sup>5</sup>

The following century would hold both advancements and continued challenges to equal rights. It wasn't until 2000 that women were allowed to join the armed forces, and only if they were unmarried. Later, this was declared unconstitutional and married women were allowed in the military. The number of women in positions of power remained very low, with men in the top jobs and women most frequently in lower positions (Willson, 2010:176). The family continued to be an important feature of Italian culture, though families are much smaller. In fact, the current birth rate in Italy is -.02%, because older generations are much more populous than current ones, and every day more people die in Italy than are born (World Population Review, 2016).

The strides made by feminists and the women's movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were certainly numerous, but sexism still lingers in Italian culture. This sexism is not only perpetuated by men, but also by women in the form of the madams mentioned above and anti-feminist women. Italy was, as Willson (2010:189) asserts, "a land of formal legal equality, but persistent inequalities."

## **B. Current Social Situation for Women**

Women in Italy certainly have more rights today than they did in the past, but they are still a far cry from reaching true equality, and sexism is still very much present in Italian culture. In an

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<sup>5</sup> These percentages are unfortunately similar to the gender pay gap that persists in The United States, where women make, on average, only 78 percent of a man's pay.



NPR broadcast in 2008<sup>6</sup>, Sylvia Poggioli says that in the media, exposure of female flesh is commonplace and “is inversely proportional to the presence of women in the labor force, in management, and in politics.” She goes on to say that feminists blame Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi<sup>7</sup>, who is widely known to be a womanizer. He is also a media mogul, and has much influence in the media and how it represents women. Poggioli (2008) says that Berlusconi perpetuates the idea of attractive, but silent women with the many showgirls he employs on his networks. Indeed, a United Nations Human Rights Council report found that 53% of women who appeared on Italian television were silent (Manjoo, 2012:6). This is certainly an issue which needs to be addressed. Women should not be portrayed as beautiful, passive things to be admired, and Berlusconi’s networks do so on the national stage, which only reinforces sexist attitudes.

Although we know that women won the right to occupy public office in the 1970s, the UN Human Rights Council report found that in Italy, men continue to dominate the job markets, especially in high ranking positions (Manjoo, 2012:6). In fact, Italy is among the six lowest ranking countries for women in the work force.<sup>8</sup> However, the discrimination in the workplace doesn’t end there. In 2012, the International Labour Organization (ILO) published an article about maternity protection at work, in which the following statistic was cited:

In Italy, at least 800,000 female workers said they were forced to resign for getting pregnant, mainly after being made to sign undated resignation letters when they were recruited. The letters were used when the companies wanted to fire them (Maternity Protection, 2012).

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=97402636>

<sup>7</sup> Silvio Berlusconi left office in 2011.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.theglobalist.com/women-in-the-workforce-a-global-perspective/>

The thought that issues like this still exist is baffling. If the injustice of discrimination on the basis of pregnancy isn't enough, according to the ILO's National Labour Law Profile on Italy<sup>9</sup>, there are no effective laws regarding sexual harassment at work, meaning that women cannot prosecute potential coworkers who may harass them (De Matteis et al.).

These issues aside, it's important to note that in 2013, the number of women in the Chamber and in the Senate both rose ten percent from the previous Parliament, making it the highest percentage of women in Parliament in Italy's history (Tambor, 2014:179).

Unfortunately, misogyny still exists in Italy, and although great strides have been made, there is still much that needs to be done. For example, according to *Treccani (Donna)*<sup>10</sup>, women are inherently unequal because of the first societies.

Non vi era una differenza significativa tra maschi e femmine, esisteva però una divisione del lavoro: la raccolta dei prodotti della terra era compito delle d[onne], mentre agli uomini spettava la caccia, attività ritenuta di maggior prestigio. Questa divisione del lavoro conteneva già i germi della futura subordinazione femminile.

[There wasn't a significant difference between males and females, but there existed a labor division; the gathering of products from the earth was done by the women, while men had to hunt, the more prestigious activity. This labor division already contained the seeds of future female subordination.]<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS\\_158903/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ifpdial/information-resources/national-labour-law-profiles/WCMS_158903/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/donna/>

<sup>11</sup> Translated by the author

The author claims that hunting was the more prestigious activity, but provides no evidence that men's work was valued more highly than women's in these societies. We cannot place the blame for today's gender inequalities on the hunter-gatherer societies of the past. They are too far removed to be the cause of modern-day misogyny.

As much as the feminist movement has accomplished and will hopefully continue to accomplish, misogyny is engrained in Italian culture to such a degree that even women have been accused of propagating it. In an article about women in Italy, Giuseppina Maltoni (2013) from the University of Bologna blames women for causing the domestic violence enacted against them, asserting that women's reactions to past injustices have brought it upon them. Her article discusses the condition of women in Italy in the past and present, and she provides her outlook on women's future. While referring to possible future endeavors to achieve equality between men and women, Maltoni writes, "all the efforts women had to face yesterday [in order to obtain rights], made them strong enough to hold on. Some of their reactions may have gone too far, and could explain part of the violence we see today. This might be a good warning for tomorrow!" However, one can argue that it is exactly this kind of mentality that will prevent feminist ideals from moving forward. Maltoni is effectively blaming women's reactions to sexism in the past for the domestic violence from which they continue to suffer. The last sentence warns future generations against reacting too harshly to inequality, so that they may avoid men's violent reactions. Though her article acknowledges that women have not yet achieved equality, this statement can be construed as very sexist. The expectation that opposition to sexism will be met with violence just shows that sexism is an issue.

The continued existence of inequality shows that there is a lack of knowledge about what true equality is (Encyclopedia Treccani, Femminismo),<sup>12</sup> and women in Italy should continue to fight for that equality. One of the largest remaining inequalities between men and women in Italy concerns the workplace. More women work today than previous generations, but a smaller percentage of women work than men, and women are consistently paid less than their male counterparts. Women are also less likely to hold high-ranking jobs, especially political ones.

Generally, the employment rate in Italy increased from 1977 to 2012, and “the increase in overall employment is mainly due to the growth of the female participation in the labor market” (Della Ratta et al. 2013). During this same period, the percentage of women in the workforce increased from 31.50% to 41.30% (Della Ratta et al. 2013). As of 2013, the gender work gap in Italy had lessened after the economic crisis, according to an ISTAT<sup>13</sup> report, because “the crisis had a heavier impact on typically male jobs in construction and manufacturing” (Giovannini et al. 2013:7).

In spite of this, Italy retains one of the highest gender employment gaps in Europe (Giovannini et al. 2013:7). Although family is still a large influence on culture, the same number of women who have preschool-aged children work as women who don’t (Giovannini et al. 2013:7). Because there are very few women working in political and representative positions, generally women consider politics to be irrelevant to their lives and interests. Indeed, in 2008, women comprised only 20.30% of Parliament (Giovannini et al. 2013:10). It seems clear that women need to have a larger presence in the Italian workforce, especially in areas like government, where their presence would mean even more improvement for women in society.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/femminismo/>

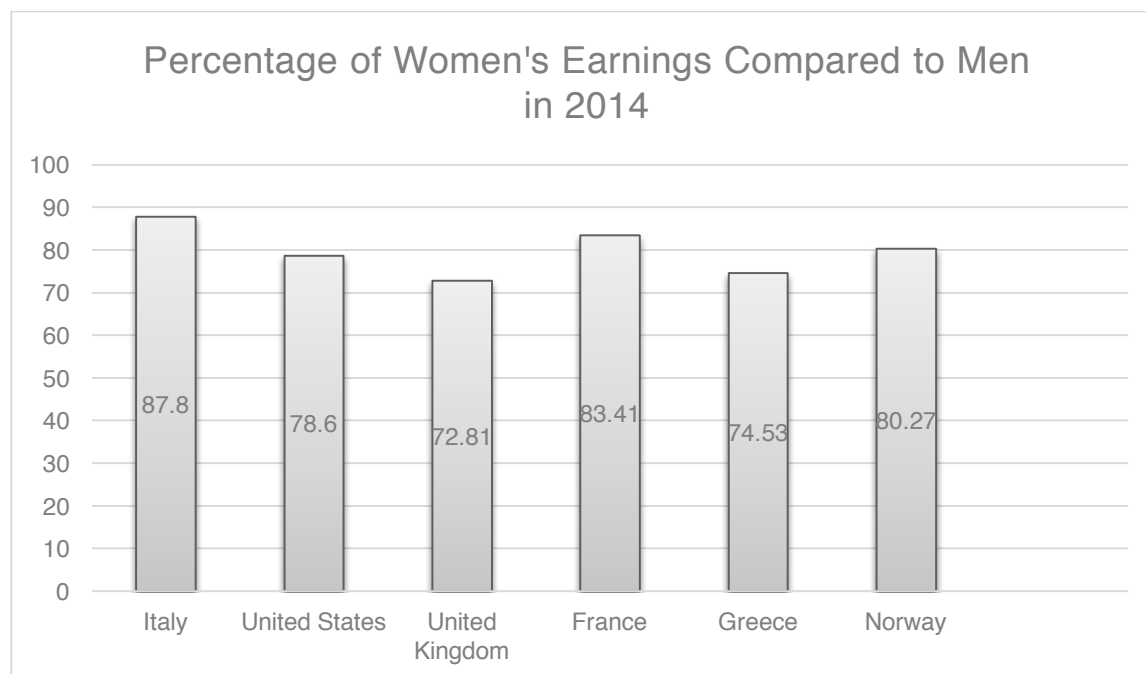
<sup>13</sup> ISTAT, or *Istituto nazionale di statistica* [National Institute of Statistics] is the main statistics bureau in Italy. It organizes the census and publishes social and economic surveys and analyses.

### **C. Workforce Data Comparisons**

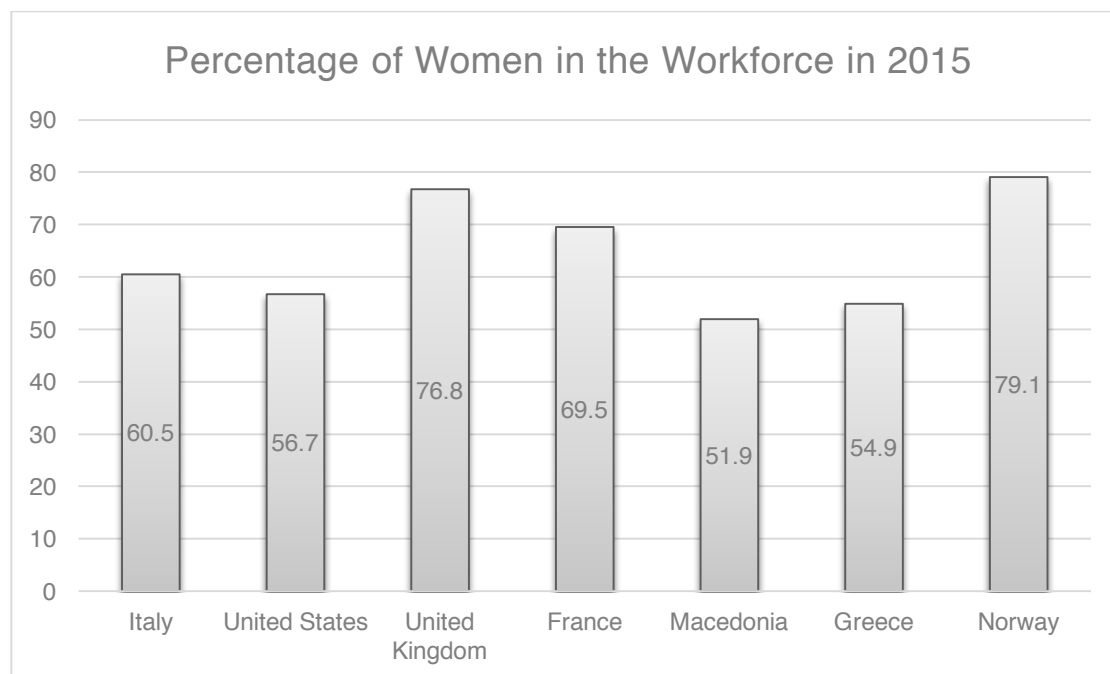
Although women have certainly gained many rights and today more women work than ever, there is room for improvement. This section discusses how Italian women's suffrage timeline compares to that of the United States and other European Union countries. It also discusses how these nations' employment and average pay rates between genders compare to Italy's. These data are used to put Italy's situation into perspective.

The women's movement in the United States won the right to vote in 1920, while in the United Kingdom, suffrage was won in 1918 for women over the age of 30, and for all women in 1928. In Italy, women won the right to vote in 1945. In France, it was in 1944 and 1946 in present-day Macedonia. Greek women won their right to vote in 1952. However, Norway was very far ahead of these other countries. Norwegian women gained the right to vote in 1907 (2015, Europe Suffrage Timeline).

It is also interesting to examine the disparities between the earnings of men and women's average hourly wages across these countries. In 2002, on average, women in Italy earned 81.1% of men's earnings, and in 2014, women earned, on average, 12.20% less than men. This trend was especially true among people with high levels of education. In 2014, women with high levels of education earned only 69.40% of the earnings of men who had the same education levels. For women in managerial positions, the hourly pay was only two-thirds of a man's (Baldi et al. 2016). In 2014 in the U.K., women made 72.81% of men's earnings; French women made 83.41%; in Greece, it was 74.53%, and in Norway, women earned 80.20% of what men earned on average. Although Italy had a higher ratio of female-to-male pay, it was actually Norway who had the highest average hourly wage for women, at €18.8 (Eurostat, 2017 & United States Department of Labor, Women's to men's earnings ratio and wage gap).



The employment rate of women should also be considered. In Italy as of 2015, 60.50% of females aged 20-64 are in the workforce. In 2015, the U.S. had 56.70% of working-age women in the workforce (Latest Annual data, 2016). In the U.K., this number is greater, at 76.80%; in France, 69.50% of these women work; only 51.90% of women in Macedonia are in the workforce (the lowest in the E.U.); 54.90% of Greek women in this age range work; and in Norway, with the third highest rate in the E.U., 79.10% of women work (Eurostat, 2016).



Some of the disparities observed between working men and women in Italy also occur in the United States. Although 56.70% of women in the U.S. work, men still have a higher percentage of their population in the workforce (69.10%). Additionally, between men and women, men were more likely to be working full time (Latest Annual data, 2016).

The social and economic aspects of the female workforce in Italy are certainly important, but for a complete picture of the situation, it is beneficial to examine it from a linguistic perspective. The nouns speakers use to refer to men and women in the workplace can offer some insight into the culture. In the following section, the prescriptive rules for occupational nomenclature are outlined, and the advantages and disadvantages of gender-specific titles are discussed.

### III. Occupational nomenclature

#### A. The Research Study

In a language like Italian where nouns are always marked for gender, the topic of equality is often an issue. It has taken a long time for women in Italy to secure the social rights they have today, and while they have not achieved complete equality, their situation has certainly improved. However, it is beneficial to examine how language is used to represent its speakers, and here, specifically women. This section begins with a description of the prescriptive rules for using Italian occupational nomenclature. This is followed by a discussion of the study, including the methodology and the reason the study was conducted. Finally, the results of the study are presented and discussed in detail.

##### 1. *Prescriptive rules on the use of occupational nomenclature*

In Italian, the rules for creating the feminine equivalents of masculine nouns are generally very clear. In their guide book *Modern Italian Grammar*, Proudfoot and Cardo (2005) demonstrate these rules. In Class A,<sup>14</sup> the feminine equivalent of masculine nouns ending in *-o* end in *-a* and the article changes to match the gender (Proudfoot et al. 2005:117-118):

<i>il commesso</i>	<i>la commessa</i>	shop assistant
<i>il maestro</i>	<i>la maestra</i>	teacher
<i>il medico</i>	<i>la medica</i>	doctor

Class B nouns which end in *-e* either

i) remain the same and only change the article:

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<sup>14</sup> The classes were created by the author in order to better organize the discussion.



<i>il cantante</i>	<i>la cantante</i>	singer
<i>il dirigente</i>	<i>la dirigente</i>	manager

ii) change the article and change the ending to *-a* to mark the feminine form (Aski and Musumeci 2013:232):

<i>il cameriere</i>	<i>la cameriera</i>	waiter
<i>il parrucchiere</i>	<i>la parrucchiera</i>	hairdresser

In Class C, nouns which end in the morpheme *-tore* to mark the masculine form end in *-trice* to mark the feminine. The article also marks gender (Proudfoot et al. 2005:117-118):

<i>l'attore</i>	<i>l'attrice</i> <sup>15</sup>	actor
<i>il direttore</i>	<i>la direttrice</i>	director
<i>lo scrittore</i>	<i>la scrittrice</i>	writer

Another morpheme, *-essa*, can be used to mark the female gender of certain occupations, and these nouns are categorized here as Class D. For example (Proudfoot et al. 2005:117):

<i>il principe</i>	<i>la principessa</i>	prince/princess
<i>il barone</i>	<i>la baronessa</i>	baron/baroness
<i>il dottore</i>	<i>la dottoressa</i>	doctor

However, there are some occupational nouns that do not have a fixed feminine form in the language; that is to say that there is alternation in form among users. For example,

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<sup>15</sup> The article for *attore* and *attrice* is the same because singular nouns which begin with a vowel always have the contracted article *l'* rather than *il* or *la*.

Masculine	Feminine	Gloss
il capitano	la capitana il capitano	captain
il sindaco	la sindaca il sindaco	mayor
il presidente	la presidente la presidentessa il presidente	president
il ministro	la ministra il ministro	minister

In these cases the alternation is possibly due to the fact that the jobs indicated by the noun have only recently become occupied by women, so the masculine forms are sometimes used. According to Angela Frati (2009) of L'Accademia della Crusca<sup>16</sup>, the uncertainty concerning the correct feminine form of certain nouns is a result of the social changes of the last few decades and the new role of women in society.

This issue of using new feminine forms was addressed decades ago by Alma Sabatini (1986), who wrote *Il sessismo nella lingua italiana* (Sexism in the Italian Language). This document was meant to be a prescriptive work for avoiding the use of sexist language in Italian. In her work, she gives an extensive list of occupational nouns and suggestions for how to use non-sexist forms of these nouns (Sabatini, 1986:103-119). For example, she recommends the use

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<sup>16</sup> L'Accademia della Crusca is the oldest linguistic academy of any language (founded in 1582), and is a research organization which focuses on the Italian language.  
<http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/accademia-della-crusca/>

of *la ministra* rather than *il ministro* for a woman, *la presidente* rather than *il presidente*, and *la capitana* in place of *il capitano* when a woman occupies the position (Sabatini, 1986:112-119).

One of Sabatini's (1986) biggest critiques is the use Class D nouns because she believes that the suffix *-essa* carries negative connotations. She asserts that the use of *-essa* is reductive (Sabatini, 1986: 47). According to Angela Frati (2009) of L'Accademia della Crusca, the suffix *-essa* was widely used in 19<sup>th</sup> century grammar, and until a few decades ago, indicated "the wife of" rather than a feminine professional form. Indeed, others agree that the use of *-essa* is sexist and unnecessary. In a study done by Merkel, Maas, & Frommelt in 2012, it was found that, the suffix "*-essa* led to a status loss compared with the masculine form" because "perception of women in different occupations changes in function of the linguistic label used" (2012:314). In their tests, they found that feminine nouns which did not have the suffix *-essa* tested more evenly against the masculine forms (Merkel et al. 2012:317).

However, that doesn't explain why there are still some nouns in Italian whose feminine forms include this suffix. Simona Regina (2012) states that it is an issue of habit. People are going to use the words that they know and are accustomed to using. According to her, one of the reasons that the usage of these words hasn't changed is that there are few women who work as dictionary editors, and a feminine point of view would be necessary to adjust certain distortions and curb certain cultural and linguistic stereotypes (Regina, 2012). However, the presence of women as dictionary editors wouldn't be enough to change language use. This type of language change is very slow, so prescriptivism through editing the dictionary doesn't mean that new forms would come into consistent use immediately, if at all, the same as Sabatini's prescriptive work didn't cause immediate language change. Additionally, if Regina is talking about curbing cultural stereotypes, she can't expect the ideology of an entire culture to change quickly based on

a dictionary entry. Fossilization of a form results from frequent use, so the change would be very slow since these forms are used often.

Although many occupational nouns have both an acceptable masculine and feminine form, often the masculine is preferred over the feminine when referring to women. Carla Bazzanella (*Treccani, Genere e lingua*) states,<sup>17</sup> that in government documents, masculine forms are used frequently, but feminine titles are hardly ever used. However, she does add that recently splitting (e.g. *dottore/essa*) has become more common in order to give the feminine a linguistic presence. This linguistic presence is important because as Pasqualetto (2013) writes, “changing the language would [have] an impact on society, breaking down inequality between genders.” Merkel, Maas, & Frommelt agree, asserting that “language conventions have tangible social consequences as they are systematically linked to economic and social gender equality” (Merkel et al. 2012:312).

While some people are hopeful that linguistic change will lead to equality, Proudfoot and Cardo (2005) suggest that maintaining the masculine form is the surest way to reach equality. They say that “when there is a choice of forms, the use of the masculine form is perceived as putting less emphasis on the gender aspect and more on the profession of the person, and is therefore seen as less sexist,” (Proudfoot et al. 2005:210). I would argue that this statement — suggesting that using the unmarked masculine is preferable — is in itself sexist. The exclusive use of the masculine form in a language in which gender is marked in many structures takes away the female identity. This is an especially absurd notion when in most cases, there is, if not a commonly used feminine form, a morphologically acceptable one. They go on to say that “the use of feminine titles is perceived as ironical and patronizing” (Proudfoot et al. 2005:210 in

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<sup>17</sup>[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/genere-e-lingua\\_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/genere-e-lingua_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27Italiano%29/)

nouns where women have recently entered the profession. They do not give a reason, but perhaps it is seen as drawing too much attention to the gender of the worker, especially in positions which are traditionally held by males.

In the paper *Shielding Women Against Status Loss*, Merkel, Maas, and Frommelt (2012:312) state that “language conventions have tangible social consequences, as they are systematically linked to economic and social gender equality.” Indeed Pasqualetto (2013) agrees, stating that language reflects society. These two ideas are related to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis,<sup>18</sup> which states that language influences the culture in which it is spoken. That is to say, that the language a person speaks impacts their way of thinking, and perhaps even the entire culture of speakers. This theory suggests that a speaker of English will have a different cognitive process, and therefore different cultural ideologies than that of an Italian speaker, or native speakers of any other language. Bazzanella (2010) states that language, in fact, far from being neutral, significantly influences the symbolic systems of speakers. This means that language can offer plenty of information about the culture in which a particular language is spoken.

## 2. *The Format of the Study*

This connection between culture and language is part of the reason this study was conducted.

There exists an issue in the Italian language and culture whereby some masculine occupational nouns marked as masculine are used to refer to women, so some scholars (Sabatini, 1986 & Frati, 2009) have suggested that these nouns be changed to a feminine form when women occupy

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/language-and-thought>

the positions. In recent years, these feminine forms have become somewhat more common among certain occupations, but not among others. Specifically, the study aims to identify which forms of ten common occupations are used for males and which are used for females.

The study examines the morphemes used in occupational nouns referring to males and females. Some of the nouns included are invariable, so the expectation was that this form would be the one chosen, no matter the gender of the person occupying the position. For the nouns which display variation, variation was expected. The use of the feminine forms in the study will be examined against their cultural implications. The results of the research will be linked to Italian culture by way of the labor statistics given above and the aforementioned struggle by the women's movement to secure rights for women and abolish the prejudices against them.

This study was conducted in Siena, Italy in the summer of 2016 and consisted of a questionnaire, which is shown in Appendix A. The questionnaire was distributed personally and the author waited while it was completed by each participant. All participants were anonymous, but completed a demographic section in which they were asked to state their gender, choose their age range, their city and region of birth, and their occupation. There were thirty-two participants, of which 9 (28.1%) were male and 23 (71.9%) were female. All participants were from Siena or the surrounding towns, and all participants were employed.

The questionnaire consisted of twelve multiple choice sentence completions, which had masculine and feminine forms of occupational nouns given as options. Each sentence required either a masculine or feminine occupational noun based on the context of the sentence, and had a blank space where the noun should be inserted. Participants were asked to choose the form of the noun they thought best fit the sentence. The words examined in this study are among the most common occupations:

<i>capo</i>	head/boss
<i>dottore</i>	doctor
<i>avvocato</i>	lawyer
<i>presidente</i>	president
<i>studente</i>	student
<i>ministro</i>	minister
<i>medico</i> <sup>19</sup>	medic/doctor
<i>capitano</i>	captain
<i>segretario</i>	secretary
<i>direttore</i>	director
<i>top</i> <sup>20</sup>	best
<i>pittore</i>	painter

The options for each noun were presented in a uniform pattern where possible. The first option was always the noun with the masculine article and masculine bound morpheme, followed by the noun with the masculine article and feminine bound morpheme, then the feminine article and feminine bound morpheme, and lastly the feminine article and the masculine bound morpheme. In cases such as *la presidente* and *una studente*, the bound morpheme *-e* can be masculine or feminine and so was not changed when creating the last option. Note that some of the options listed are not grammatically possible. For example, *la direttore* or *il dottoressa* would not be expected because the suffix and the article do not have the same gender, which is not

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<sup>19</sup> The data collected from this item is not considered in the study because the question is worded in such a way that the data does not provide relevant information. Andrea is a male name, and so *il medico* is the expected response. All participants selected *il medico*.

<sup>20</sup> The data collected from this item is not considered in the study because the noun selected is not a formal occupational title. Moreover, it is a noun borrowed from English and would be expected to take a masculine article. Indeed, all participants selected *il top* as the feminine form.

grammatical in Italian. In Italian, all parts of a noun must match in order to convey its gender. These options were included so that all gendered options of the noun were available to the participants. The goal was to have all morphological forms covered and to avoid making assumptions about possible variants.

There are three groups of nouns that had four options on the questionnaire<sup>21</sup>. The nouns *capo*, *ministro*, *capitano*, and *segretario*, begin with consonants, and therefore can take the article of both genders (*il* m.sg. or *la* f.sg.). Their bound morphemes, which change the gender of the noun, are Class A nouns, like *avvocato*<sup>22</sup>, so combining the articles and suffixes results in the options listed. The next group includes *dottore*, *presidente* and *studente*, which are Class D nouns. They can take both articles, but their feminine morpheme is *-essa*.<sup>23</sup> The last group in the questionnaire includes the Class C nouns *direttore* and *pittore*. They all take feminine and masculine articles, but their feminine morphemes are different. Making the masculine *-tore* feminine means using the suffix *-trice*, so again, combining the articles and morphemes yields the four options listed. It was expected that *il capo*, *la dottoressa*, *l'avvocato*, *una studentessa*, *un segretario*, *la direttrice*, and *la pittrice* would be invariable. The nouns in which variation was expected were those for president, minister, and captain.

The motivations for including each of the nouns in the questionnaire are as follows:

- Item 1 examines the form of *il capo*, the English equivalent of ‘boss’, when a woman holds the leadership position. This is an interesting title to examine because women have

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<sup>21</sup> There were no Class B nouns included in the study.

<sup>22</sup> In this case, the only possible article is *l'* because the noun starts with a vowel. *L'* can indicate either gender.

<sup>23</sup> For *studente* and *segretario*, the indefinite article was used, but there were still only two options, one masculine and one feminine for each (*un/uno* m.sg. and *una* f.sg.). As stated above, *studente* (Class D) has the feminine morpheme *-essa*, while *segretario* (Class A) has the masculine *-o* and feminine *-a* morphemes.



only begun to hold high positions within companies in recent decades. The goal is to discover if a feminine form would be chosen or if it would remain masculine.

- The use of *il dottore* is included in the context of a woman occupying the position. This is to determine if the feminine form *la dottoressa* is truly fixed in the language, or if other options have begun to be used, such as the form ending in gender neutral *-e* with the feminine definite article (*la dottore*) or the masculine form (*il dottore*) would be used. The fossilization of *la dottoressa* is supported by the fact that female doctors have been around for a long time. The first was Laura Bassi in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Aski and Musumeci, 2013:411).
- *L'avvocato* is included to verify whether *l'avvocata* is in use by speakers, since it is an available form, and since women have only recently occupied positions as lawyers.
- Including *il presidente* is important because there are still very few women in government and in positions of power within organizations which have a president. As a result, some variation in responses was expected when participants were asked to identify the title of a female president. Additionally, it was examined in order to determine if the morpheme *-essa* would be the feminine marker used since women have only recently begun to occupy the position of president.
- The noun *studente* is included for confirmation that *la studentessa* is a fossilized noun for female students, even when *la studente*, which is not attested in usage but is viable because it is based on forms with gender neutral *-e*, such as *la presidente*, is provided as an option.
- Like *il presidente*, *il ministro*, and *il capitano* are examined in this study because they are positions in which women are not widely employed. The goal is to determine whether a

morphology marking the feminine gender is used by speakers when referring to women in these positions.

- The use of *un segretario* in this study was done in the context of a male occupying a position that is traditionally held by women. The goal is to see if a male in a feminine role would receive the feminine form of the noun in the same way that women are sometimes given the masculine title.
- The use of the feminine forms of *il direttore* and *il pittore* are examined in this study in order to determine whether the feminine suffix, *-trice*, which they have traditionally had, is still used or whether the suffix is no longer used and the gender neutral noun ending *-e* is used with a feminine article (*la direttore, la pittrice*) as in *la presidente*.

### 3. Results

Of the ten sentence completions, seven had a unanimous response, meaning that every participant agreed on the form of the occupation that belongs in the sentence. These were:

*il capo*

*la dottoressa*

*l'avvocato*

*una studentessa*

*un segretario*

*la direttrice*

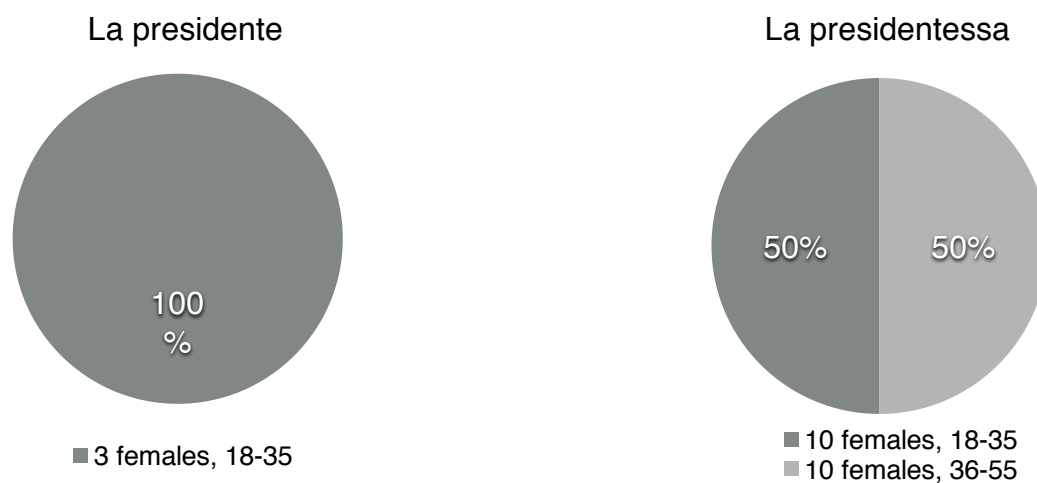
*la pittrice*

Of these, *la dottoressa* (Class D), *la direttrice* (Class C), *la pittrice* (Class C), *una studentessa* and *un segretario* (Class A) had expected results according to prescriptive grammar rules. That is, *-essa* and *-trice* are still markers of feminine gender in these nouns. *Una*

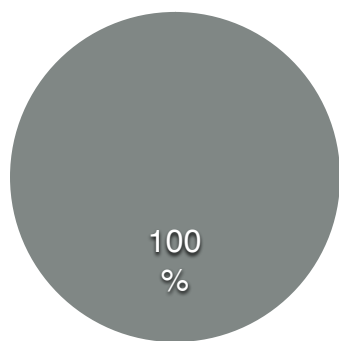
*studentessa*, like *dottoressa*, is possibly fossilized. *Un segretario* demonstrates that a male in a traditional female occupation is marked as a male by the article and the bound morpheme *-o*.

The other two responses (*il capo* and *l'avvocato*) have other, morphologically acceptable feminine forms that were not chosen by any participant. For example, the morphologically expected, feminine form of *il capo* would be *la capa*, and *l'avvocato* would be *l'avvocata*. It is very interesting, then, that none of these other options were chosen, because these are relatively recent additions to female career choices and the feminine is not formed using any type of female marker. For these nouns, both male and female speakers have labeled females in these roles with the masculine noun.

The remaining three occupations yielded the most varied and interesting results. The most variation occurred with the word for “president.” All males chose *il presidente* to be the title for a female president. The remaining responses were all made by women, and were split between *la presidentessa* (62.5% of all participants, half (10) of which were females between the ages of 18 and 35, and the other half (10) were females ages 36-55) and *la presidente*, where the remaining 9.4% (3) of responses were made by females between the ages of 18 and 35. That is to say, all but three women ages 18-35 and all women ages 36 to 55 chose *la presidentessa*. The other three women of the younger group (ages 18 to 35) selected *la presidente*.



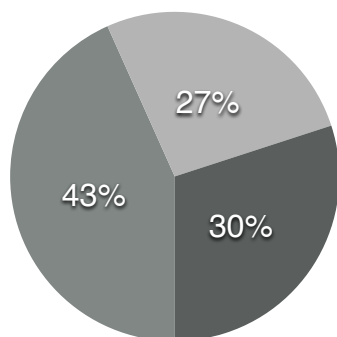
Il presidente



■ 9 males

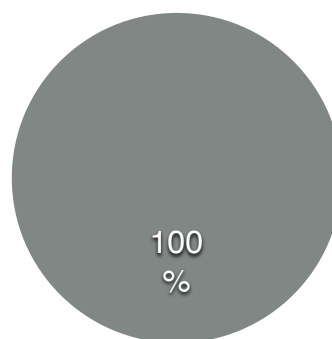
The word for minister was split unevenly, with 93.75% (30) of participants responding *il ministro*. Of these, 13 were females between the ages of 18 and 35, and 8 were females between the ages of 36 and 55. All 9 men responded with *il ministro*. The remaining 6.25% (two females from the older group between the age of 36 and 55) chose *la ministra*.

Il ministro



■ 13 females, 18-35  
 ■ 8 females 36-55  
 ■ 9 males

La ministra



■ 2 females, 36-55

The last noun with some varied response is the word “captain.” Here, 21.9% of participants (7 males) thought that a female captain’s occupational title is *il capitano*. The other 78.1% (two males and all 23 females) chose *la capitana*.



#### 4. Discussion

These results have very interesting implications for both the linguistic and social aspects of feminism. For the equivalents of president, minister, and captain, women always chose a feminine form, while men, with one exception, consistently chose masculine forms to refer to women in these positions of power. This tendency for men to assign women a masculine occupational noun shows the persistence of inequality in Italy. Although it is perhaps not a conscious decision to give women masculine occupational nouns, it certainly speaks to the males’ cultural values. It is possible that these positions are still associated with masculinity, given that in the past these high-ranking positions were always occupied by men and therefore

power is associated with masculinity. Now, no matter who occupies the position, it may still be considered a powerful, masculine space, especially since, as previously discussed, political documents still almost exclusively use the masculine forms.

However, for these three occupations, women always chose a feminine form, which suggests that women do not choose to use masculine occupational nouns to refer to themselves. This may reflect modern feminist ideology introduced to Italy by foreign writers like Simone de Beauvoir with *The Second Sex* and by Betty Friedan with *The Feminine Mystique*, that a distinction between men and women is necessary and allows women to claim their own feminine identity. For the equivalent of president, most women chose *la presidentessa*, suggesting that the suffix *-essa* is perhaps losing, or does not have in the mind of the modern speaker, the negative connotations which were discussed by Sabatini. However, it is important to note that some of the younger generation rejected the *-essa* morpheme and chose *la presidente*. It could be that the use of *la presidentessa* is a result of analogy to similar, fossilized nouns like *la studentessa*, and *la dottoressa*, rather than to Class B nouns such as *la dirigente* and *la cantante*, which suggests that the trend is for president to belong to Class D rather than Class B. In the case of *la dottoressa*, female doctors have existed for much longer than female presidents, meaning that *la dottoressa* has support for being fossilized, whereas female presidents have not been around very long, so the feminine form is more likely to be in flux.

The results for *il ministro* do not strongly support the idea that women are claiming their feminine identity with language, since only two women chose the feminine form *la ministra*. However, this may be a result of the word's similarity to the word for 'soup' (*la minestra*).<sup>24</sup> It is possible that this linguistic similarity is undesirable and so women were not eager to use it in

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<sup>24</sup> Even though *l'avvocato* could be confused with *l'avocado* ('avocado'), the masculine form is still chosen.

reference to themselves. In this instance, some of the older generation were the ones who chose the feminine *la ministra*. *Il capitano* is the last word which showed variability. In this case, again, all women chose the feminine form. However, there were two males who chose the feminine form *la capitana* to refer to a female captain.

The instances in which women chose masculine forms rather than feminine forms (*il capo*, *l'avvocato*) suggest that the forms are fossilized, but these results contrast with those of *presidente* and *capitano*, which indicate that women may seek a linguistic presence concerning their occupations. These contrasting results are perplexing. It may be necessary to conduct further research in order to explain why in these cases the masculine form is used for females. This research would have to be detailed about the history of both females and males occupying these positions and any possible linguistic differences concerning the use of these occupational nouns.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Feminism has had a long history in Italy, and the fight for equality isn't over. Women are still paid less than men for the same job, and are discriminated against in the workplace. They still do not hold high-ranking positions as often as men do. The continued fight for equality exists not only socially, but also linguistically. With only one exception, all male responses suggested that men would continue to use masculine forms to refer to women in the given occupations. However, in certain positions of power (namely captains, ministers, and presidents) women tend to refuse to use masculine nouns to refer to women in cases where there is not already a fixed form in use. These results are in line with the expectation that these nouns would show variation.

In the case of captains, the variation in form is most likely due to its infrequent use. In the cases of ministers and presidents, the variation is most likely because these are nouns referring to political positions, which women have only begun to occupy recently.

The study's results suggest that women are not content with this linguistic sidelining and are motivated to use language to gain equality and recognition. Women appear to be using language to strengthen their feminine identity, which is in line with the ideology of modern feminism. They want a clear distinction between men and women to exist, and this distinction will show that positions of power should not be inherently masculine, but rather can and should be feminine as well. Women are instigating language change, and even though it is a slow process, they are seizing both a social and linguistic identity.



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## Appendix A

## Questionario

Maschio o Femmina? (seleziona uno)

Età: 18-35    36-55    55+

Luogo di nascita: \_\_\_\_\_ Regione: \_\_\_\_\_

Professione: \_\_\_\_\_ (Se è studente/studentessa, dia la professione/le professioni dei genitori)

Legga le seguenti frasi e scelga l'opzione migliore.

1. Beatrice è \_\_\_\_\_ della ditta.
  - a) il capo
  - b) il capa
  - c) la capa
  - d) la capo
  
2. Anna è \_\_\_\_\_ più intelligente nell'ospedale.
  - a) il dottore
  - b) il dottoressa
  - c) la dottoressa
  - d) la dottore
  
3. Maria è \_\_\_\_\_ per il ladro.
  - a) l'avvocato
  - b) l'avvocata
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ dell'associazione è Cristina Monti.
  - a) il presidente
  - b) il presidentessa
  - c) la presidentessa
  - d) la presidente
  
5. Sara ha incontrato \_\_\_\_\_ che si chiama Alice ieri sera.
  - a) uno studente
  - b) uno studentessa
  - c) una studentessa
  - d) una studente
  
6. \_\_\_\_\_ di difesa è una donna potente.
  - a) il ministro
  - b) il ministra
  - c) la ministra

- d) la ministro
7. Gianni preferisce \_\_\_\_\_ che si chiama Andrea.
- a) il medico
  - b) il medica
  - c) la medica
  - d) la medico
8. \_\_\_\_\_ della squadra è Lucia.
- a) il capitano
  - b) il capitana
  - c) la capitana
  - d) la capitano
9. Pietro ha \_\_\_\_\_ che si chiama Alberto.
- a) un segretario
  - b) un segretaria
  - c) una segretaria
  - d) una segretario
10. \_\_\_\_\_ del programma è Marta.
- a) il direttore
  - b) il direttrice
  - c) la direttrice
  - d) la direttore
11. E come professoressa sei \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) il top
  - b) la top
12. \_\_\_\_\_ di *Susanna e i vecchioni* è Artemisia Gentileschi.
- a) il pittore
  - b) il pittrice
  - c) la pittrice
  - d) la pittore