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Sommario/riassunto	This study provides an extensive database for future research on gender and a detailed discussion of the expressive effects produced by means of this grammatical category. By drawing a clear line between the denotatum and the designatum and viewing gender as part of the solution to the problem of giving linguistic representation to a mental construal of a spatial nature, this study avoids one of the recurrent stumbling blocks which has hindered research -- the temptation to define a grammatical category using biological parameters. The evidence presented shows that gender is not a representation of the presence or absence of sex, human traits, or even personality, but rather the sign of a more abstract mental operation, that which consists in defining the contained space, the form which is implied by any

notional content construed in the nominal domain.
