



Building new bridges

Second generation LGBTQIA+ in Italy

The logo for GiP (Generation in Progress) features the letters 'GiP' in a large, dark blue, sans-serif font. The dot of the 'i' is replaced by three colored dots (yellow, orange, red) stacked vertically. Below the letters, a horizontal rainbow bar is visible.

GiP

Generation in Progress

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Inside the concept of queer migration we most readily approach the issues of a second – and subsequent – generation of LGBTQIA+ people.

These issues are rarely tackled; the space dedicated to these problems seems almost invisible. When these issues are addressed, the focus is mainly on children, and in some cases, nephews (in the case of enlarged families, or if the first migrants were the grandparents) with a minoritarian gender and/or sexual orientation coming from a path of international migration (from countries where LGBTQIA+ identities and/or propaganda on these issues are criminalised). If at an international level there seems to be scarcity of material, one can imagine that even less has been produced in Italy (most being completed by researcher Massimo Modesti).

For this reason, we decided to conduct a research project, although small, to understand the needs, desires, and existence of people living in our country, where they are excluded by the limits of who can be defined as Italian. They are usually instead defined as second-generation migrants, as they have a different cultural background than most of the population.

The GIP – Generation in Progress research (in progress because generations are not static, therefore neither is their definition) attempts to connect the SG (second generation) community through social networks, allowing the sense of belonging to a specific culture. This community is defined as those who experience many difficulties, mostly that of not feeling themselves as part of the definition of SG, despite being born and/or raised in Italy.

GIP does not claim to provide answers or to be a representative of the Italian situation, yet it is the first picture of an unknown topic, with much to investigate in.

Jonathan Mastellari, President IAM

Second generation LGBTIQIA+ persons find themselves inevitably embedded in complex social, cultural, and political frameworks, having to face several issues that are often silenced or ignored within their own communities/families. They are often victims of various type of discriminations and discriminatory behaviours which can result into feelings of shame, fear, and isolation. Moreover, the lack of specific legal and political measures in the Italian context enhances the chances of preventing and eradicating such behaviours.

This double discrimination affects their process of self-determination and their effective integration in the society in which they live.

These issues need to be addressed from an intersectional perspective, taking into account the layers of oppression made up of racism, sexism, and classism, specifically in historical period characterized by the criminalization of otherness.

Although in 2016 the Italian Government approved the Equal Marriage Law, according to ILGA Europe, the number of hate crimes has not diminished. Italy is still number 32 of 49 European countries that still has a void in terms of LGBTIQIA+ rights, in both legal and political measures.

The lack of a law against homo-trans-biphobia is reflected in the criminalization towards the communities and cultures of LGBTIQIA+ people, who are depicted as deviant, only exacerbating racism and sexism in the already existing social conflict. The research conducted by IAM is the first in this field, shedding light on a group of people, the second generation LGBTIQIA+, who often do not openly live their sexual orientation or gender identity in a society incapable of giving specific answers and responses to their needs of positive inclusion and integration.

What do these people think? What do they want and need?

This research has done work regarding these questions, despite there only being few people involved and the specificity of each story.

From our experience at Agedo, associations hold a fundamental role in shedding light on these issues, promoting visibility and support. Specifically, within our 25 branches throughout national territory, we work and promote local projects to join together with other social realities, particularly in schools. The educational system represents, in our view, a fundamental institution in promoting inclusion and equality, yet it has increasingly become known as a space of bullying and homophobia. It is necessary to extend and increase our social campaigns, to educate and inform, to strengthen our local work and boundaries among associations, to work toward a common path of inclusion and respect, involving authorities and holding an active role in the making of the political agenda.

Those who are Second Generation reclaim different spaces, their own voices and needs, recognizing themselves in multiple identities and cultures. They carry their own crossroads between their families, communities, personal relationships, and dimensions of society.

This “bridge generation”, as it has been defined, holds a fundamental role in questioning the social structure we live in, bringing new interactions and spheres of knowledge, modifying the very idea of culture and identity, and reshaping a social context which is constantly evolving itself.

We hope the work that has been commenced can follow, bringing into the picture new tools of understanding, improving situations that are sometimes hard to bear, and creating a real integration.

We can make an ideological debate but here we are talking about lives, personal stories, relationships, and the needs of millions of people that call into question our stereotypes and social expectations which have been imposed upon us, those very people who fight every single day against the logics of the patriarchy and heteronormativism.

We work, in Agedo, as advocates in order to enter the public space and erase the culture of invisibility which states that “what it is not said, does not exist”.

Every person, migrant or not, has the right to be themselves, to live their own life and reach happiness without having to ask for it.

Elisabetta Ferrari, President of Agedo Bologna

Fiorenzo Gimelli, President of Agedo Nazionale

GIP

This research is aimed at investigating the social structure in which second generations of LGBTQIA+ people (hereinafter SG-LGBTQIA+) operate and, although in a small space, offering a platform for visibility and thought.

Terminology

In order to define the research sample, the chosen definition of SG is that of Rumbaut, who delineates three sub-categories of SG based on a temporal continuumⁱ. The first one, called Generation 1.75, includes migrants aged between zero and five years; the second one, Generation 1.5, includes migrants aged between six and twelve years; the last one, Generation 1.25, defines migrants aged between thirteen and seventeen yearsⁱⁱ. Nevertheless, according to many Italian scholars who have worked on SG-related studies, a fourth category exists that includes people with mixed parenthoodⁱⁱⁱ.

In fact, it has been pointed out how the very concept of an SG migrant is a contradictory one. If therefore we consider among SG people those born and raised in their parents' country of settlement, the term migrant appears inadequate to define their social identity. It seems that, more or less systematically, this concept creates an overlapping of the two generations, that of the parents and that of the children.

The second requirement taken into consideration is the belonging and the identification within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Methodology

In structuring this research project, two main issues were tackled: firstly, the scarcity of scientific literature due to the lack of significant works on SG-LGBTQIA+ in Italy was a serious matter to deal with; consequently, much time was needed to choose the instruments for the data collection. A quantitative and qualitative trajectory was chosen, meaning creating a questionnaire and conducting interviews. In order to obtain a general overview of the national context, the questionnaire was divided in five main sections. The first part was titled Talk about yourself and it included data such as age, sex, gender, residence/years of residence in Italy, citizenship/nationality, parents' country of origin, language(s), and religion. This introductory part was included to define the spectrum under many points of view. The second part, Gender identity and sexual orientation, provided a wider picture of sexual orientation and gender identity based on the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. Parts three and four, respectively Your identity and Your relationship with your origins were focused on matters related to the intersectional identity of SG, both investigating the process of coming out – if existing – and its reception by the parents, the community and the cultural model of reference. The fifth part, To be LGBTQIA+ in Italy, aimed at obtaining both an overview of the community and in understanding the intersectionality level thereby present. The last part, Conclusions, included a space for opinions and suggestions on this research.

In technical terms, open and closed questions were adopted to foster the participation of the respondents, moreover, the minimum age to participate was set at sixteen without further generational limitations, in order to reach the widest sample possible. Lastly, the anonymity of the respondent was granted, as the questions posed were intimate and delicate.

The questionnaire has been presented and promoted on Facebook through MIGRABO LGBTI page, IAM-SG first page and personal accounts, in a time lapse of four months which was extended to one year, from July 2017 to July 2018. Moreover, personal acquaintances within the LGBTQIA+ community have been used to spread the word.

Structure

Since the target and the potential thematic outcomes arising from the answers were not known, the questionnaire was developed to be as easy and comprehensible as possible. Questions ranged from the respondents' origins and their relationships with their LGBTQIA+ identity, to the dynamics within the social spaces in which they live, such as school, workplace, and LGBTQIA+ contexts.

This generality implied, once the data was collected, a selection of information that sometimes resulted in not being elaborate or contextualised enough.

The work was structured once a deep analysis of the answers and of the issues experienced was completed, thus implying a gradual and specific research work for each thematic.

The first section includes the term second generation and a brief contextualisation of the phenomenon in Italy, both in normative and legal terms. At the same time, the condition of the LGBTQIA+ community in Italy is presented with reference to the latest norms and the status quo in terms of civil rights.

The second section was dedicated to the cultural dimension, underlining the relationship between the origins and/of the family and the dynamics associated with such an intersectional identity. This section includes answers obtained through the questionnaire as well as information coming from two interviews. The theoretical continuum inside this chapter comes from the definition of stranger provided by George Simmel^{iv}. This definition was also applied to the research previously conducted on SGs as carriers of several cultural instances and as point of contact between two different worlds of meaning. In this sense, space, be it symbolic or physical, becomes a key point in understanding the plurality of pasts and the potential future perspectives.

The third section concerns the LGBTQIA+ identity dimension, and it delineates its characteristics. In particular, the focus is on the coming out phenomenon and its implications on the familiar context. The chapter begins with the theoretical and practical work of George Weinberg, an American psychiatrist emeritus who contributed to the definition of the concept of homophobia and consequently contributed to the de-pathologisation of homosexuality^v. The instances brought by him are then reconnected to the theoretical positions promoted by Michel Foucault during his career, concerning

the categories of power and knowledge, two ontological constructs that discipline reality and society^{vi}. Starting from these theoretical premises, the work of Judith Butler on gender, sex and sexuality, and on the real impact of these categories in the feminist debate, is briefly delineated^{vii}.

This theoretical perspective frames the analysis of the obtained answers and the issues posed by these answers in the political and public debate in which SG-LGBTQIA+ are involved.

Finally, the last section is dedicated to the relationship between intersectionality and SGs in informal contexts, such as meeting places and dating apps. The answers obtained from the sample are compared to the totality of the questionnaires, to obtain a wider overview within and outside the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Italian context

In May 2015, the Italian Chamber of Deputies voted in favour of the reform of citizenship decided by the government. It included a more inclusive concept of citizenship based on *jus soli* and *jus culturae* rather than on *jus sanguinis*^{viii}.

Jus culturae is a completely new concept, adopted by the Italian government to define a milder *jus soli*. It is drafted for children of regular migrants with permanent or long term residence (five years at least), born in Italy or arriving before their twelfth year of age, having completed an educational cycle^{ix}. This law divided the public opinion, exacerbating the already present debate on migratory policies and on the European management of the refugee crises happening on the Italian shores and territory, as well as on the lack of real political reactions^x. Over the last thirty years Italy, which was a country of emigration, became a place of resettlement and, over the last five years, it became an obligated step for the many migrants undertaking the Mediterranean route^{xi}.

The recent increase in long term migrants, and the inclusion of their children in the educational system pose some issues in terms of integration and implementation. Following the point of view of Gallino, integration can be defined as a multidimensional process where a plurality of social and institutional actors are simultaneously involved. The incoming subjects are integrated in receiving social and legal context, where the social conflict presents low or non-contingent levels^{xii}.

On the other hand, the media is involved in what can be defined the social construction of reality, i.e. the formation and reiteration of the dominant argument^{xiii}. The criminalisation of migrants created a symbolic dislocation caused by the structural failures and the de facto lack of reactions of the receiving societies, thus reiterating the existing legal and cultural boundaries^{xiv}.

The depiction of diversity as a deviation deeply influences the lives of those simultaneously living different multicultural narratives; it also influences social inclusion, where at the same time social conflict risks arise^{xv}.

To be LGBTQIA+ in Italy

The last two years represented a turning point for LGBTQIA+ in Italy. After a decade of legislative proposals by different legislatures, in May 2016 the Parliament approved same sex unions, despite months of reviews and heated discussion on the draft. The law was proposed by deputy Monica Cirinnà and it grants civil rights to same sex couples, including cohabitation, mutual assistance and inheritance, although this institution cannot be compared to that of marriage^{xvi}. The first draft proposed, along with a recognition of the status quo of the rainbow families, the so-called step-child adoption, which is the right to adopt the partner's child^{xvii}. The law caused a re-emersion of atavistic issues on the very concept of family and parenting, highlighting the internal contradiction of the Italian society. The law was welcomed with firm opposition both in the political world and by the public opinion. It is not by chance that the opposition movement called itself pro-family, summarising an idea of family embedded in the national territory and deeply intertwined with a conservatism and in the traditional roman catholic framework^{xviii}.

The controversy around the law shed a light on the relevance of discrimination, prejudice, and antagonism towards the LGBTQIA+ community. Through the employment of hate speech in defining the rainbow families, not only was the capacity to educate and advise their children damaged, but also their intimate being. The lessening of their parenting skills strengthen an ancient homophobic argument that sees homosexuality as misleading and pathologic^{xix}.

Although it is important to tackle the resilient features of the LGBTQIA+ community and their consistency in reaching new spaces of inclusion and visibility, it is also essential to highlight the instability of their path in a society where their lives are still at risk. In this sense, ILGA and the EU Observatory on sexual and gender discrimination have repeatedly requested an actual implementation of measures to promote equality and tolerance, starting from the educating system^{xx}. Hate and

intolerance crimes are made of ignorance and fear. Therefore, it is through the educating system that a wider campaign of acknowledgement shall begin^{xxi}.

The most consistent work for inclusion and promotion of right comes from non-State actors, such as civil society and NGOs. Throughout the years, the number of LGBTQIA+ associations grew consistently, creating a differentiation in terms of offered services and problem solving. Broadly speaking, non-State actors represent new forms of governance and representation, becoming new mediators between citizens and institutions^{xxii}.

Bridge generation

George Simmel defines the foreigner as a person situated at the limit/border, near and far at the same time, inside and outside the society of destination. He/she is a subject in motion and a carrier of motion itself, representing the outward that comes closer to the inward, never the same, the element that interrupts the repetition of the same^{xxiii}. Therefore, the foreigner is the one who simultaneously crosses physical spaces – places and States – and cultural spaces, creating meeting and interactions. The potential of action and the resonance of such interactions is infinite and sometimes unpredictable. The foreigner is, therefore, a social form that by definition calls into question the status quo of societies he/she comes in touch with.

In an era in which borders are at the core of the international political agenda, the intruder/other ends with being characterised symbolically in a discriminatory framework of rejection and confining. The stranger defines the entering space and the two mutually define each other, in an extreme condition that appears absolutely exceptional, atypical, different, dangerous^{xxiv}. The border becomes the extreme limit beyond which there is no more legality, no more security^{xxv}.

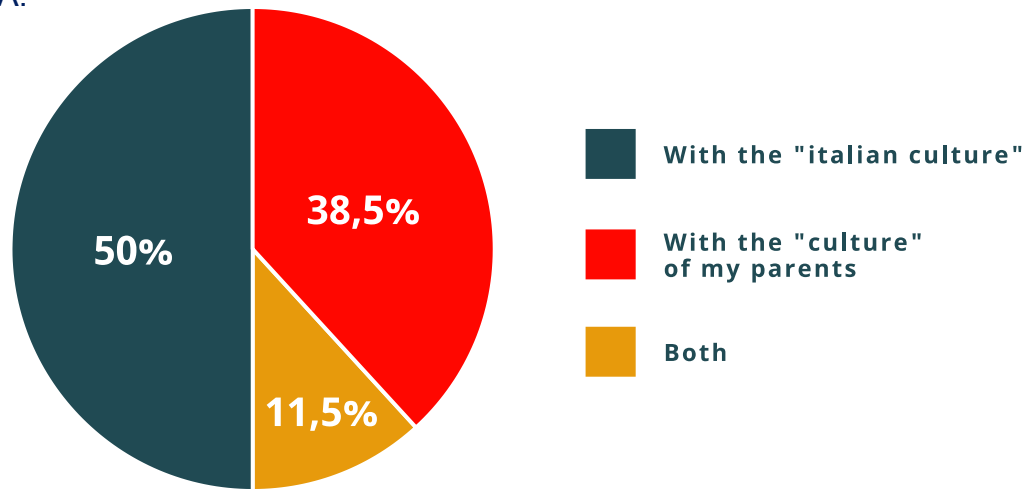
In this context, SGs represent a potentially revolutionary social form. If the foreigner has an intrinsic ability for change his/her children, carriers of cultural spaces and multiple meanings, are themselves symbolically a change that can replicate forever. Therefore, they are a bridge generation, a potential tangible answer to the issues related to integration and the reaching of a plural and inclusive reality^{xxvi}.

Culture and cultural identity

From the questionnaire handed out to 34 individuals aged between 17 and 39 years, some significant facts emerge. In particular, as far as the perception of the cultural dimension of membership is concerned, 50% of the respondents feels to be

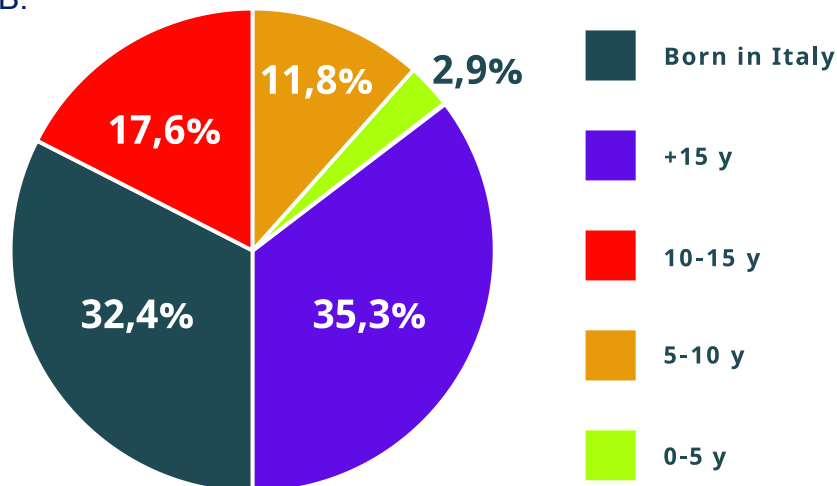
recognised in the Italian cultural model, whereas 38.5% identifies with both the Italian their parents', and 11.5% mostly with their parents'.

A.



This is quite interesting if compared with the time of residence in the Italian territory: 32.4% of the respondents declare to be born in Italy, 35.3% to have lived in Italy for more than fifteen years, 17.6% for at least ten years, 11.8% for at least than five years, and 2.9% for 2-5 years.

B.



Even though it may seem hard to draw any conclusion, it is nevertheless interesting to compare the type of answers obtained in Chart A. with the time of permanence/residence on the Italian territory. To this regard, taking into consideration the two variables – time and cultural belonging – a general correspondence is identified, with a limited number that deviates from this trend (three respondents). The fact that two out of these three respondents has an Italian parent seems to confirm how the cultural belonging is deeply tied with single trajectories of life and experience rather

than with a granted equation depending on external phenomena. In this sense, it is interesting to reflect on the tension that creates between social and family expectations, and on how they do not necessarily match. The answers concerning the sense of belonging highlight the plurality of perspectives.

What we believe relevant from the answers obtained from the two interviews are the individual perception in the construction of their own identity. The subject that self-determines and chooses for him/herself not only his/her own cultural belonging, but also how to decline its mandate, the daily and material practices. This eclecticism leads to two reflections.

The first, already mentioned above, defines the very term of second-generation migrants as empty and misleading^{xxvii}. The second underlines how cultural identification processes may be complex to synthesise and how they are deeply tied with the single experiences and ability of synthesis of external outputs, and therefore how they may have multiple outcomes^{xxviii}.

Culture is a field for social construction, and it is not immovable, but it changes with time. Therefore, it is essential that it is at least partially shared. These characteristics make cultural analysis a space for difficult comprehension insofar, despite the fact that the cultural model can be considered a result of individual subjectivity, it certainly implies a series of features socially shared within the considered community^{xxix}.

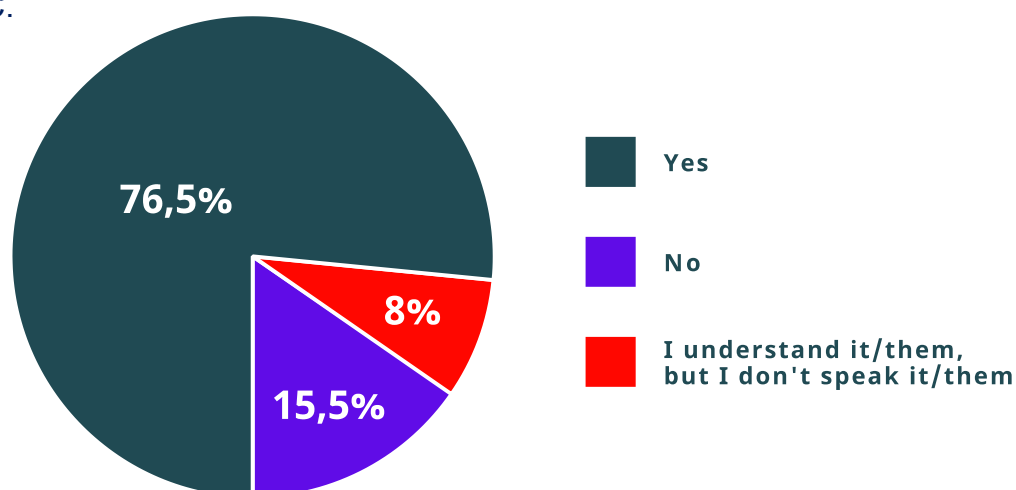
Linguistic and religious dimension

The cultural dimension presents numerous subsets: the linguistic and the religious being among the most relevant. Language, as religion, is the expression of a cultural luggage, the dimension of the choice of how to be that each person goes through during his/her existence.

From our research, a widespread bilingualism emerges (76.5%). It is identifiable both as a form of continuity with the parents' traditions and as part of a process of internal learning within the familiar unit. Indeed, from certain studies previously

conducted in Italy on the schooling process of SGs, it results that many subjects tend to forget and/or remove on purpose their mother/parent tongue throughout the years, as a form of detachment and/or psychological stress connected to the socialisation processes in the society of residence. From the collected data, these issues are not present^{xxx}.

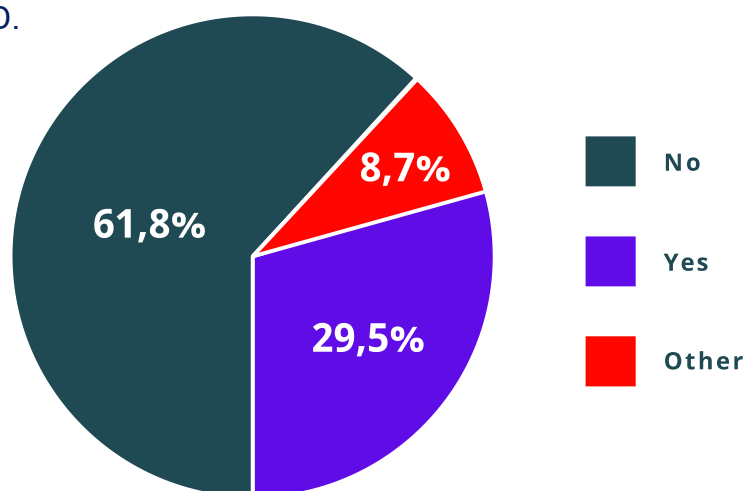
C.



However, it shall be stressed that the type of question (i.e. closed) employed did not allow for further in-depth analyses on the matter. On the other hand, the analysis appears to be different when considering a relationship with a religious dimension.

More than half of the respondents admit to a general separation from religion (61.8%), which is placed both in a national dimension of secularisation and within a common choice of the LGBTQIA+ community, which rejects the hetero-normative standards proposed by various religious institutions over time^{xxxi}.

D.



It is interesting to assess how, when present, the religious sphere does not necessarily coincide with the familiar one, thus showing a certain autonomous identity. The religious dimension appears to be a variable of particular interest when studying the identification processes, inasmuch religions, whatever they may be, assume a set of values to which – more or less – correspond, take on and bring a synthesis within one's own existence.

The religious dimension is a feature that has been largely reported within the communitarian discourse thanks to the external influences of SGs and associations, witnessing how a dimension of one's own identity does not necessarily imply the negation of the other. Moreover, these realities show a strong sense of empowerment and agency skills, along with the importance of the creation of social networks that can respond to one's needs, where the official channels seem not to be active enough yet. Once more, change lies in the materiality of bodies that act and interact, uniting worlds that theories want to be separated par excellence.

Domestic spaces: between detachment and integration

The discourse on space and integration inside it, along with the revendication of multiple realities, is further enriched with reference to the relationship with places and communities of origin (familiar), and socialisation processes connected to intersectional realities.

If the construction of the identity is an interaction process between different factors and meanings in which the subject shapes the picture of him/herself in connection with others, as stated by sociologist Manuel Castels, those who live in a plurality condition experience a more complex process^{xxxii}. The constant comparison between worlds of different meaning and social contexts somehow hinders the achievement of the identity dimension, leading sometimes to situations of conflict^{xxxiii}. Conflict is therefore linked to both the relationship between the arrival society and the society of origin, and their respective communities.

In the specific case of SG-LGBTQIA+, the integration and socialisation processes are strongly connected to the reception of their gender and/or sexual orientation. In this sense, the answers provided in Section 5 of the questionnaire show how much the

relationship with discriminatory community of origins can be hindered and can affect their identity dimension. Indeed, from the elaboration of the open questions, it emerged that those who answered the question:

Have you ever been a victim of “outing” from someone of your community concerning your sexual orientation and/or gender?

And, with reference to potential visits to the country of origin of the parents:

If yes, did you have to hide or omit your sexual orientation and/or gender?

It was affirmed that the observed discriminatory behaviour was caused by the:

- a) Impossibility to visit again the country/countries in question
- b) Reason for strong discomfort and/or sufferance
- c) Omission/negation of one’s own gender/sexual orientation

The impossibility to have access to some spaces because of concrete fears or potential discrimination strongly influences not only the agency and the ability to act of individuals but, in these specific cases, it can limit and/or hinder the very sense of belonging to the realities in which they belong or belonged. All in all, detachment from certain cultural spaces becomes a pivotal condition to exist.

By crossing subsequent data, the detachment process and non-inclusion within the community of origin becomes evident in the answers given to the question:

Have you ever noticed problems of reception and/or integration in your parents’ community/communities of origin because of your sexual orientation and/or gender?

It is possible to assess how real or potential discrimination can be or has been a reason for closure and progressive estrangement, as well as reason for conflict within

the family unit. Some answers show how being LGBTQIA+ can still be the cause for isolation/exclusion within certain communities and/or families.

From the collected data and the obtained answers, the existence of a forced material detachment becomes clear. Such detachment is caused by the impossibility of being fully accepted and integrated within the community of origin but not necessarily an aprioristic reject of that community, nor it is correlated to an abandonment of cultural issues – language and religion – promoted by such cultures. To separate these dimensions is fundamental in understanding e.g. the development of autonomous cultural movements, of rereading of original motions in one's own key, and of cultural promotion outside the communitarian channels.

Everyday spaces

Until now, empirical studies on SGs focused mostly on the scholastic context as a place for social interaction^{xxxiv}. School was meant to be a platform that allows the access fundamental tools for social mobility, and an essential place for the individual as a citizen and a political subject^{xxxv}. The attention of scholars to the dynamics and policies developed within the scholastic context derive from the necessity to understand how social and non-social measures adopted throughout the years effectively resulted in the life of post-migratory generations^{xxxvi}.

The answers to the question:

Have you ever had any problem connected to your intersectional identity in a scholastic and/or work context?

Once more, had a different nature. Quantitatively speaking, 18 out of 24 respondents did not declare negative episodes and/or discriminatory acts against them. A minimal part of the respondents (three) admitted that they have not been victims of negative episodes since they were not openly gay and not easily classifiable, also according to their foreign origins. The remaining part affirms to have been victim of episodes of bullying, mocking, and discrimination.

From the obtained answers, some interesting data can be inferred.

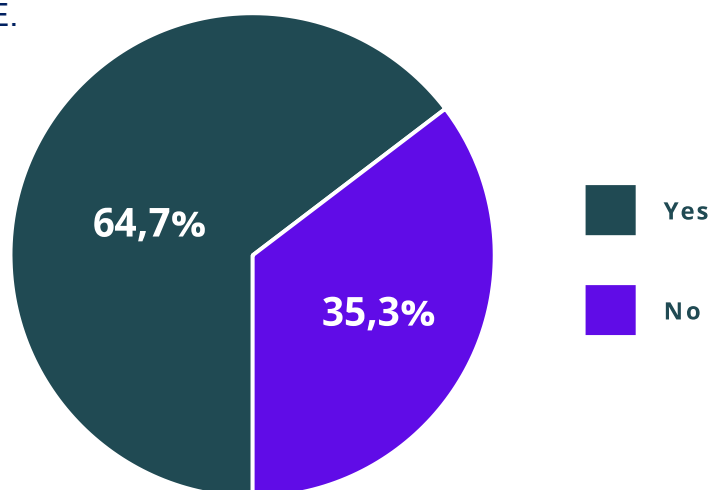
First of all, a minimisation of discriminatory phenomena, fostering their reiteration, is often present. Secondly, the general reception and the widespread connivance led the victim to feel isolated and/or less confident towards a positive change.

Considering these two conclusions, the third emerging factor is the difficulty in expressing the need for help, increased by sense of guilt and forms of self-awareness. It is not rare that the same victims close themselves in a spiral of shame and commiseration, in which their relationships with others and social interactions are conflicted and prevented^{xxxvii}

Therefore, these testimonies bring attention to the necessity of creating spaces for listening, education regarding plurality, and inclusive dialogues.

LGBTQIA+ spaces: the Italian community and the relationship with intersectionality

E.



In order to further understand the degree of social inclusion of SG-LGBTQIA+, a Section (6) was created inside the questionnaire to focus on the integration and on the dynamics observed inside the LGBTQIA+ community in Italy. The first question of Section 6 clearly shows how 64.7% of the total respondents feel integrated inside the Italian LGBTQIA+ community. 2/3 of this 64.7% affirm to play an active role inside the community and/or to frequent it regularly. The remaining 35.3% show contrasting opinions: 70% of them show indifference or no interest. Open answers did not allow

identification of the motivation. The remaining 30% admits instead that racist attitudes exist inside the LGBTQIA+ community. These data and percentages in favour of the LGBTQIA+ community seem to be confirmed in the next question:

Have you ever been discriminated inside a LGBTQIA+ association or by one of its members because of your foreign origins?

However, some of the answers highlighted how racial discrimination is predominant compared to that of sexual orientation, through the repetitive employment of jokes and subtle comments. This vision was also shared by two interviewees who emphasised how in Italy it is more difficult to be a foreigner than a LGBTQIA+.

Although on a quantitative level the answers hopefully confirm that in the LGBTQIA+ world one can find a safe and inclusive environment, it is evident how, on a qualitative level, the criticality of certain statements should be a call to reflection and future work.

New listening spaces

As previously stated, the aim of this work is to create not only a sensitisation campaign on the issues concerning the community of SG-LGBTQIA+, but also, in the coming future, to promote spaces for listening and support, as well as further dialogue.

To this end, in the last section (8) of the questionnaire, the following question was asked:

If you had any problems, to whom did you speak with?

The intention was to investigate the advocacy work inside the association world and to sift through the supporting net in certain circumstances. The obtained answers outlined three different ways for help: the impossibility to obtain the sought help, help from a private and/or family context, an external help of a legal/medical source and/or association.

From these three typologies, three different elements emerge: the difficulty in obtaining help and in disclosing some issues, that inevitably led the person to feel isolated; the consciousness of the criticality of certain situations and the necessity to obtain adequate medical and professional support; lastly, the importance of advocacy of many associations, who represent for many a point of reference. On the other hand, the criticality of the first answer is a cause for the reflection on the necessity to have more spaces, still missing in some areas, in the Italian territory and in the more isolated areas, as well as on the importance of having an ad hoc support able to act on multiple dimensions. At the same time, the relevance of the networking and support work promoted by the many realities of solidarity and revindication of social rights already existing is emphasised. It appears evident, in light of the collected data, that it is necessary to have and to promote an increasing inclusivity inside LGBTQIA+ context, so that the promotion of more sympathetic trajectories can become not only a common objective, but also a shared reality.

Fluid identities

In 1972, academic and psychotherapist George Weinberg coined the term homophobia, referring to discriminatory behaviours spread across many of his colleagues and beyond, towards the LGBTQIA+ community. With this terminology he aimed at indicating the fear – sometimes extreme, phobic – that many have towards non-heteronormative identities, linked to preconceptions and prejudices of a moral, medical and religious nature^{xxxviii}.

According to Weinberg, these fears are based upon structural pre-judgements within the society, cultural superstructures disciplining the human behaviour according to fixed schemes and values. Weinberg's work and activism led to the de-pathologisation of homosexuality and to a change of perspective in the scientific approach towards it. Weinberg identifies channels, places, and institutions within which homophobia is produced.

The existence of binding superstructures for the action of people and for their very existence is an argument that has been recalled and suggested by many philosophers and scholars of sexuality and of its cultural implications^{xxxix}. In particular, studies conducted by Foucault on power and the materiality of its action on bodies, focus on pervasiveness and on the totalising nature of power itself, defining and shaping the life of people according to precise actions of control. It is through scientific thought, knowledge and its theories that the act becomes identity character, that sodomy becomes homosexuality, not a deviant action anymore but pathological identity. Disciplining sexuality leads to the construction of a system of categorisations, in which the individual becomes a public discourse of interest and preservation of the pre-set order^{xl}.

The work of Judith Butler on gender, sexuality and the disciplining of bodies partly recalls the conclusions of Foucault. In her famous book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, the author analyses the work of deconstruction made by several authors and feminist philosophers, mainly exponents of the literary and philosophical trend called *écriture féminine* and French theory, on classics of the philosophical and psychoanalytic thought, from Plato to Freud, in order to understand how such policy of and on body was born.

Recalling the contribution of Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir, in the first chapter Butler affirms the importance of distancing from the feminist universalism and essentialism, included in the categories of Woman, gender, and sex.

The Universal shall not be the destiny of feminist revendications, and representation and delegation shall not necessarily coincide. Having set these ontological bases, Butler continues towards the analysis of identity's construction, intended as a constant becoming located in the present and never in the future. Nevertheless, identity has always been associated with the person category, and it has been conveyed by markers such as sex, gender and sexuality, which are mutually interdependent. Consequently, the so-called incoherent genders, i.e. the plural identities free from the ontological binarism at the core of the tripartite relationship (gender, sex and sexuality) cannot exist and cannot be told. Recalling Simone de Beauvoir, Butler affirms that even if to be a woman is a "in becoming practice" then it is also a "in-progress one", and therefore "as an in-progress practice it is open to re-signification"^{xli}. Even a corporal signification, inasmuch bodies themselves are regulated by colloquial and significative practices, a subversive construction, a performance.

The core of Butler's deconstructive work is the revendication of non-universality, the rejection of social constructs as truth, the critique of the concept of individuality as a static and natural entity, the repositioning of perspectives even within social sciences, in order for the incoherent bodies to find their own space and capacity of action, the questioning of the heterosexual matrix within its own cultural constructs, "imitating the founding illusions of identity"^{xlii}.

To be or not to be LGBTQIA+

Language is an instrument in constant evolution, the result of continuous improvement and of a synthesis of surrounding instances. Labels and categories are often the result of top-down replies. However, sometimes they are born as a bottom-up standpoint. The LGBTQIA+ acronym arises and evolves from the need of self-positioning and self-defining of people that do not recognise themselves in the dominant hetero-sexism, in a universe that proclaims itself as such. The need for positioning is therefore the result of an answer, to some extent a political one, in order to distance oneself from a discourse, once again a political one, of assimilation and homologation towards a natural, common horizon: normative heterosexuality.

The LGBTQIA+ community is an alliance uniting instances of very different natures, that keeps and claims its organicity. The plurality of instances further increases as other intersections are considered, such as the belonging to a specific community (Chicano, Afro-American and so on), in an intersection that cannot be easily reduced to the category of minority.

Coming Out

From the third feminist wave emerged the need to exit from polarising dynamics: from the idea that only two poles exist and that each form of transition shall necessarily go on one direction or the other and shall be radical and immutable. On the other hand, society imposes regulations, limits, and conventions with which one shall constantly negotiate with. Therefore, the point of conflict arises from our and others' expectations: when they result as divergent, they ignite mechanisms of exclusion and imposition.

In this sense, coming out can be intended in two different ways: a negotiation with the surrounding reality that requires a confession on one's own non-binary or non-heterosexual identity. Alternatively, it can be understood as an affirmation of one's person, an act of identity or a willingness to reaffirm oneself according to one's own criteria. To come out is not a realisation of one's own identity, but the moment in which it is vocalised and thus externalised to other people.

To this end, the decision was made to include the issues of coming out and outing in the questionnaire, considering both as relevant experiences to better understand the condition of the SG-LGBTQIA+ experience. Moreover, starting from the previously

exposed assumptions, the coming out experience was investigated reusing a binary dynamic (man-woman), with the aim to assess two phenomena: the existence of a passing of the dichotomic vision in gender dynamics, and therefore an evolution of real customs or, on the other hand, a social construction of reality, strongly influenced by binarism.

Out of 34 respondents, 100% answered affirmatively to the question:

Have you ever come out to someone?

However, the answers obtained to the subsequent question:

If yes, can you specify with whom?

Were quite heterogeneous. 96% of the respondents affirmed to came out with friendly persons, 23% does not include members of the family unit. This seems to be an interesting data if compared to the answers obtained in the next question:

If you came out with your parents (or with one of them), have you experienced any difficulty?

From this question, a difficulty in coming out to family is emerged. It is often linked to non-reciprocating expectations. There were several typologies of difficulties observed: the social fear that parents manifest the idea that their children will have to deal with forms of discrimination and rejection in the society in which they live, and that these forms may have repercussions on the family itself. Rejection is linked to forms of homophobia or conservatism, where the fear that a nonbinary and non-heterosexual life may imply a change in the sentimental layout, such as the impossibility to have a family or children...

It is interesting to notice how features related to the origins of the family unit did not emerge. Instead, distinctions (when present) related to gender dynamics were assessed. Specifically, positive answers to the question:

In your opinion, is the behaviour/reaction of parents (or even one of them) different if a woman rather than a man comes out? If yes, why?

It was emphasized that because of chauvinism in society it is more difficult for a man than for a woman to be homosexual, inasmuch as the man is not compliant to the idea of masculinity par excellence, whereas the woman is considered as a sexual object, therefore less visible.

This opinion was also expressed by G., the first girl who was interviewed. She reiterated several times during our meetings how her relationship with her wife is often misinterpreted as friendship, and how it had been considered as such by her family for a long time. Moreover, she pointed out how intimate behaviours shown by both of them in public places are often mistaken for simple displays of affection between girls.

It is interesting to notice how the level of discrimination toward transgender and transsexual people has been levelled with cisgender gay men as particularly visible groups in some answers of the questionnaire. Nevertheless, discriminations follow different paths: on one side, there is a – sometimes – unaccepted identity; on the other side, there is an identity that has been denied since the beginning. The condition in which many transsexual and transgender people lie is therefore twice as discriminatory. They find themselves as non-being, constantly embedded in a process of affirmation of denied existence. In this sense, to come out acquires a different meaning: it is a sometimes a tacit process due to the physiognomic changes linked to it, and in constant denial with the outward.

A sense of preoccupation and protection emerges. It is linked to the judgment and the prejudice that LGBTQIA+ people potentially find themselves having to deal with. On the other side it can be deduced how strong and interiorised social pressures are, since they undermine even the relationship within the family unit. Indeed, with time,

dialogue, and information, many negative reactions changed, and this also emerges from some of the answers. From the two interviews emerged both an initial reject, and therefore an estrangement, and a general preoccupation due to scarce knowledge and difficulty to tackle sexuality *latu sensu* of one's children.

To this end, an association called Agedo was founded in Italy. Its mission is to support families and parents of LGBTQIA+ people and to help them through a path of acceptance and comprehension^{xliii}. Indeed, from the answers obtained, a strong presence of a taboo and a sense of dismay towards non-canonical life choices of one's children and relatives, as well as friends clearly emerged.

Intersectionality in informal contexts

Socialisation happens through many dimensions that are not related with work and/or family environments. In other words, subjects operate both in a public and in a private sphere.

For these reasons, the following questions were included in Section 6 of the questionnaire:

Have you ever been discriminated inside a recreational LGBTQIA+ context (club, bar, festival, group meeting, informal meeting, sexual meeting...) because of something connected with your foreign origins?

Have you ever noticed any problem in dating website used by the LGBTQIA+ community (Grindr, PlanetRomeo, Brenda...) for reasons connected with your foreign origin?

Do you think that making your ethnic preferences clear on dating chats is a form of racism?

Do you think that your foreign origin facilitated you in finding a partner?

The obtained answers will be analysed following two main narratives: on one side, the picture and the construction of the self that each of us make in real life; on the other side, the social avatar and the reiteration of stereotypes through it.

To navigate in the real world: preferences and racism

Research promoted inside the Afro-American community and feminist and civil rights movements have put at the core of their arguments the so-called white privilege as well as the reiteration of colonialist dichotomies for a long time, as explanations of the current disparity in terms of representation and representativeness of the so-called minorities. Such dynamics are reflected in the materiality of bodies, in the construction of their picture and in the construction of their identities^{xliv}.

Dating apps

Over the last years, dating apps have become an increasingly employed tool in the quest for a partner, either regular or casual, both in the LGBTQIA+ and in the heterosexual world. Moreover, the range of action embraces more and more countries and contexts in which the private sphere is still strongly regulated.

Even further, in certain cases, the use of such platforms represented the only network of contact with other LGBTQIA+ people in the country, as well as a means of communication to have a glance on the international LGBTQIA+ context. In other words, through these platforms, some people were able to live their gender and/or sexual identity and to obtain new possibilities in life.

Whatever use and the possibilities arise from it, it is indisputable that all these digital platforms are based on appearance and representation of the self.

In this context, answers to the question:

Do you think that making your ethnic preferences clear on dating chats is a form of racism?

Provide some interesting considerations.

The advocates of no suggest the idea that preferences, as expressions of personal tastes, cannot be accused of racism or discriminant social forms; on the other hand, they fall in the full freedom “of being and having whatever one wants”.

The advocates of yes, when made explicit, highlight how the very concepts of race and ethnicity are misleading and empty, inasmuch they are expression of a homogeneity that do not find any feedback in the real world.

The advocates of an intermediate point of view try to distinguish two aspects: on one side, there is the aesthetic taste; on the other, there is an aprioristic exclusion of certain typologies. Therefore, preferences should fall in an aesthetic factor. However, by making the contrary explicit, would be a discriminatory behaviour. What clearly emerges from the obtained answers is the subjectivity and fragility of the line between personal taste and discrimination.

Mass media have a strong impact in the creation of aesthetic standards in their reiteration of the everyday life. A subgroup of media is represented by advertisement, a field for numerous recent studies on representation and representativeness of minorities. Indeed, a very common phenomenon in the design of advertisements is racial assimilation, i.e. the homologation, by style, skin colour and so on, of non-white people to white people^{xlv}

Therefore, it seems evident how aesthetic attractivity partly derives from certain standards which in turn are expressions of the ever present dynamics of power and submission.

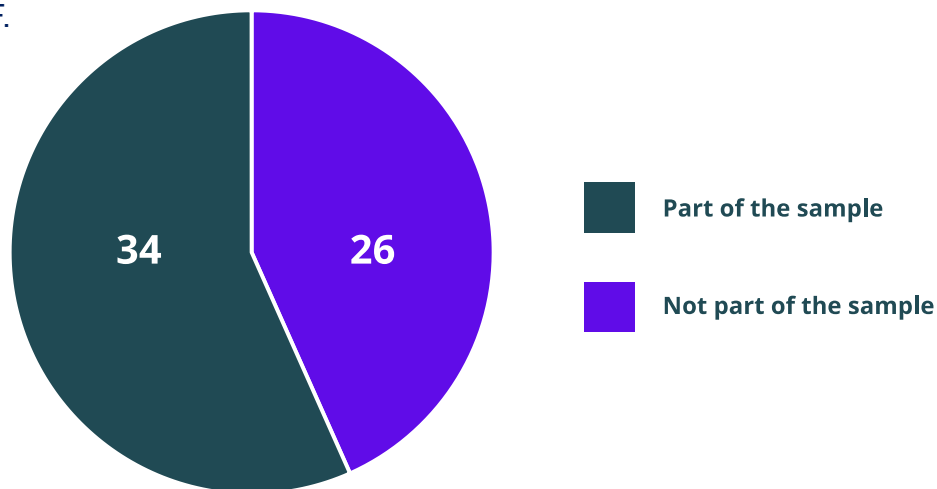
What seems difficult to assess is the degree of influence that these aesthetic superstructures have in the private sphere, on the way we live and share our intimacy.

The analysis of the answers tends towards the idea that to make some preferences clear, to the detriment of other, is a form of discrimination. This is also the

point of view of W. and G., two of the interviewees, who expressed an unfavourable opinion to the filters used in dating apps and, in general, in methodologies implemented in the choice of a partner based on ethnic reasons.

For this reason, considering the relevance of the topic, at first only non-sampled questionnaires were evaluated, for a total of 26. The idea at the core of this choice was to understand, through the extension of the sample, what would be the general impression on racial preferences in a LGBTQIA+ sample with Italian origins and/or foreign individuals who recently immigrated in their adulthood.

F.



The result is different: only three out of 26 respondents answered affirmatively or pondered an intermediate answer, whereas the rest is negative. Ethnic and, as specified in two cases, cultural preferences are part of selection criteria that are available to each of us ha when looking for a partner.

A choice was made to include answers from these questions concerning intersectional dynamics within the private sphere of LGBTQIA+ people, as they result the only points in which such an evident disparity is present. Indeed, other sections of the questionnaire, concerning gender/sexual orientation dynamics and the family/cultural dimension, present a general similarity in first-hand experiences.

Having considered these factors, with reference to the above mentioned questions and answers, it seems that Italian respondents are less incline to notice a symptom of discrimination in racial preferences. To the contrary, SG-LGBTQIA+ shows a more critical approach. This attitude can be explained with the fact that these subjects

directly experience certain forms of discrimination concerning their ethnic and cultural origins.

Nevertheless, the complexity of the issue, which is embodied in the intimate dimension of the individual, does not allow further considerations on the matter.

Conclusions

Considering the work carried out, three elements appear evident.

First of all, the necessity to provide further protection at a legal level, by focusing both on a new law on access to citizenship and on the importance to increase the fight against homo-transphobia through ad hoc legislation. In view of statistics, reports and reported testimonies, episodes of legal discrimination related to cultural diversity and

gender and sexual orientation are still evident and recurring, in a framework of reiterated violence that acquires verbal as much as physical features.

Secondly, the social and formative importance of the school in its education about diversity. Indeed, according to the reported testimonies, the perpetration of acts of homophobic and racist bullying were observed within scholastic institutes themselves. These statements are included in an already delineated framework made of reports and official statistics that affirms the happening of discrimination towards LGBTQIA+ people in a scholastic and/or working context, having repercussions on their sociality. This data clashes with the educational and formative role of school in the life of individuals, sometimes becoming a space for discrimination and social inclusion.

In order to contain these episodes, a deep reflection on future trajectories seems essential, both in educational and inclusivity terms, by promoting the intervention of ad hoc specialists, training the school personnel, developing sensitisation campaign towards diversity.

Lastly, to increase and invest in new associative spaces in the process of inclusivity of SG-LGBTQIA+. These realities show the importance of a local approach, structured on concrete needs, expression of a socio-cultural dialogue between different instances. Associations play a role that can be defined as international, by supplying spaces for expression and dialogue platforms where institutions turn out to be not present enough. The immediacy of the action of numerous associations concretely represent a fundamental tool of reply to particularistic instances, a place of belonging and identification. Therefore, to increase associative realities at every level may represent a tool for help and integration towards many identities considered at the brink of the social spectrum.

As previously argued, to synthesise the vastness of perspectives and specificities of such a heterogeneous social group as that of SG-LGBTQIA+ and to identify its specific needs, represents an operation that can be hardly summarised within a sole thesis composition.

In light of this data, we believe that this research does not have a solution, but rather some starting points with which to build a new reality that can include the heterogeneity of its own phenomena.

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Cinzia Laconi, author

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