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Department of Law

Dottorato di Ricerca in Human Rights: Evolution, Protection and Limits

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF  
“GENERATION 1.5” IN ITALY: THE IMPACT OF  
MIGRATION**

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XXXI CICLO  
ANNO CONSEGUIMENTO DELLA TESI 2019

## **ABSTRACT**

The present doctoral thesis is the result of the research activities conducted as a part of my PhD at the Department of Human Rights at Università degli Studi di Palermo.

The research aimed to examine the impact the fact of migration has on the situation with domestic violence in the context of migrants of Generation 1.5 in Italy. Migrant families in Europe are increasingly experiencing domestic violence and as they represent a vulnerable and marginalised part of the society, it makes researching of the phenomenon challenging.

The “Generation 1.5” – people who migrated at the age of 5-19 years, whether it’s with their families or following their family on the family reunification procedure – are one of the most vulnerable groups inside migrant communities. In the majority of cases they didn’t make a choice to migrate and took the fact of migration quite hard, as for them it meant leaving the familiar surroundings, school, friends and having to adapt to a new country, language and culture. Many of them lived through an abandonment of a sort, as in many communities one or both of the parents migrate first, leaving their children with their relatives for a period of a few years, and after reaching the country of destination had to re-meet their parents.

This phenomenon creates new situations of vulnerability and conflicts, which, as the result, often leads to situations of domestic violence – direct and witnessed.

Through the cases of migrant communities, this research will discover whether the fact of migration in the contest of Generation 1.5 can trigger domestic violence, which forms and why. This research is informed by feminist standpoint theory which suggests that research, particularly which focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized. To research this topic, I am using qualitative methods approach: a comparison of personal interviews conducted with people who suffered domestic violence, community leaders, religious leaders and social workers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate my doctoral thesis to my grandmother, Dr. Liudmyla Demchenko – the first woman in my family with a doctoral degree. Having served during the World War II as a military medic, she later defended her PhD thesis in paediatrics and dedicated her life to curing children. She passed away when I was very young, but her courage, strength and determination were always inspiring me to be a strong independent woman.

I want to thank my tutor and thesis adviser, professor Simona Feci, who guided me through the past three years and without whose input this thesis would've never been finished. I also want to express my gratitude to professors Isabel Trujillo and Aldo Schiavello, and the Università degli Studi di Palermo for believing in my research and providing me with the scholarship to conduct it.

It is difficult to overstate my appreciation for the three-month long research fellowship I spent with the Institute for European Studies of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. I specifically want to thank professors Christian Kaunert, Florian Trauner and Ilke Adam for their support and feedback on my research.

I am particularly grateful for the assistance given by my evaluators, doctors Sophie Withaeckx and Santiago Boira, for their availability and the time they dedicated to providing me with their constructive feedbacks and suggestions.

My sincerest appreciation goes to everyone who helped me during the field research period – Vesna Scepanovic, Margot Ccanto, Suad Omar, Michaela Arcari, Klevisa Ruci, Flor Viddaure, Anna Immordino, Manuela Emme, Mara Cortimiglia, Delfina Nunez and Claudia Pedrotti. I specifically want to thank all of the amazing people who trusted me with their life stories and allowed me to interview them for my research. I would like to offer my special thanks to Wajahat Abbas Kazmi for not only trusting me with his story, but also for everything he does to empower others with his work and example.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to my family, my partner and my friends for supporting me in this process, motivating me to follow my dreams and passions and reassuring me that I can achieve any goal I set for myself with a bit of determination and effort.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	8
Significance of the Problem.....	8
Purpose of the study and Research Questions.....	10
Definition of Terms.....	12
Methodology.....	14
Data collection, analysis and reporting.....	16
Limitations in Data Collection.....	18
Overview of the thesis structure.....	20
<b>CHAPTER 1. Domestic violence and Generation 1.5</b> .....	21
1.1 Domestic Violence against young people and its causes.....	22
Definition of Domestic Violence.....	22
Effects of domestic violence on children and young people.....	25
Causes of Domestic Violence.....	28
1.2 European legal framework on Domestic Violence.....	31
Domestic violence in the EU legal framework.....	31
Domestic violence in Italian legal system.....	35
1.3 Domestic violence and migration.....	39
Immigrant context of domestic violence.....	39
Migrant women and children’s vulnerability to violence.....	42
Restrictions and barriers for help seeking.....	45
1.4 The 1.5 Generation and related risk factors.....	47
Who belongs to Generation 1.5?.....	47
Characteristics of Generation 1.5 and related risk factors.....	50

CONCLUSIONS.....	53
<b>CHAPTER 2. Generation 1.5 in Italy.....</b>	<b>55</b>
2.1 Italy – from emigration to immigration.....	56
Italy as the leader of European emigration.....	56
Immigration patterns in recent decades.....	60
2.2 Italian Generation 1,5 – who are they?.....	64
Generation 1.5 in numbers.....	64
“Second generations” and the school as a form of first socialisation.....	68
2.3 Italian Research on Generation 1.5 in the past decades.....	72
ASSIRM’s nation-wide research on migrant families.....	72
Project AGORA.....	75
The first nation-wide research ITAGEN 2.....	78
Other notable works.....	81
CONCLUSIONS.....	83
<b>CHAPTER 3. Interview findings.....</b>	<b>84</b>
3.1 Results of the interviews with people with migrant background.....	85
Hiwet.....	85
Faven.....	94
Adonay.....	101
Amalie.....	109
Dilana.....	118
Andi and Priya.....	126
Margot.....	134
Andrea.....	143
Abbas.....	148

Alim.....	158
3.2 Results of the interviews with experts.....	167
Michaela Arcari.....	167
Klevisa Ruci.....	170
Flor Viddaure.....	172
Le Onde staff.....	174
Delfina Nunez.....	177
Claudia Pedrotti.....	179
3.3 Findings of the interviews based on Research Questions.....	182
Question 1. Does the fact of migration influence the level of domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?.....	182
Question 2. How the fact of migration influences the situation with domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?.....	185
Question 3. Which types of domestic violence can migration trigger?.....	188
CONCLUSIONS.....	190
<b>CHAPTER 4. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>191</b>
4.1 Summary of the research.....	192
4.2 Conclusions of the study.....	194
4.3 Recommendations.....	195
Recommendations for policy makers.....	195
Recommendations for social workers and school staff.....	197
Recommendations for the future researchers.....	199
CONCLUSIONS.....	201
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>201</b>
General bibliography.....	201
Legal framework bibliography.....	224

<b>ANNEXES</b> .....	228
ANNEX A. Interview scripts.....	228
ANNEX B. Participants of the study – people with migrant background.....	232
ANNEX C. Participants of the study – experts.....	234

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Significance of the Problem**

To grasp the relevance of this study, it is essential to explore the key issues that Generation 1.5 migrants face before, during and after their move to Italy. These issues, such as initial separation from their parents, move to another country during their formative years, re-meeting their parents in older age and unfamiliar context, cultural and linguistic problems during the period of adaptation etc, can become risk factors and triggers for different types of domestic violence.

As Menjivar and Salcido underline (2002): “Some scholars have observed that the incidence of domestic violence among immigrants may be attributed to specific circumstances that can be encapsulated as stressors [...] These researchers also linked immigrant-specific contributing stressors, such as immigration status, lack of English proficiency, prejudice, and cultural variables, to the occurrence of abuse. Scholars in this tradition would argue that eliminating stressors would contribute to decreasing the incidence of domestic violence. However, other studies demonstrate that eliminating stress factors (e.g., alcoholism, drugs, financial problems) does not necessarily end domestic violence”.

It is essential to comprehend that not only Generation 1.5 migrants are at risk of domestic violence due to their vulnerable position as migrants, pre-teens and teenagers, but also are different in the sense that their population is growing. And their own existence is becoming more and more significant as a topic of political discourse and, unfortunately, in many cases as an instrument of manipulation (Boccagni and Baldassar, 2015).

Over the last two decades Italy has moved from a country of emigration to a country of immigration (Van Oudenhoven, Ward and Masgoret, 2006). As estimated by Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, in the period 2011-2065, according to the prognosis, based on the demographic projections created by ISTAT, natural dynamics in Italy will be negative by 11,5 million people (28,5 million will be born and 40 million diseased), when the migration dynamic will stay positive by 12 million (17,9 million will enter and 5,9 million will leave the country). Even though Italian attitudes toward immigration have been described as hostile and xenophobic (Kosic & Phalet,



2006), Italians over the years stayed much more accepting of migrants compared to most EU states (Thalhammer et al., 2001; Dixon et al., 2018).

So, as the number of migrant people and, consequently, the number of young migrants is growing, both the society and the researchers need to look into the struggles, risks and life experiences of youngsters from different cultures.

One of the aspects of this research is to reveal the deeper understanding of the young people's life stories and stories of violence in their families through the interviews I have conducted with the representatives of Italian Generation 1.5. Domestic violence often prevents its victims from being full members of society and achieving their full potential as active citizens and their contribution to social and economic reality is damaged (Kane, 2008). Hence, a deeper research on domestic violence in migrant communities is needed in order to answer important theoretical question and create a base for policy making (Menjivar and Salcido, 2002).

According to Logar, Weiss, Stricker and Gurtner (2009), many women with migrant background are lacking language skills and knowledge about the host society, have no family or any social acquaintances in their new country, and, due to their migrant conditions and lack of financial freedom, become dependent on their husbands or partners. Same goes for young migrant people that also need to adapt to the new social and cultural context upon their arrival to Italy.

Migrant condition is always a risk factor: the scientific literature shows that migrants in Europe get menial jobs that are dangerous and poorly paid and lack of opportunities for career advancement more than residents. The majority of migrants who suffer domestic violence do not seek help fearing to reveal their illegal status, to lose parental rights, or because they lack economic independence and knowledge of their rights.

Whilst there is now a vast literature on domestic violence, there has been less attention paid to the specific features of domestic violence inside migrant communities, especially in Europe and particularly in Italy that is very diverse. And few studies have attempted to bridge these gaps in order to more fully discuss the experiences of Generation 1.5.

## **Purpose of the study and Research Questions**

The main purpose of this research is to explore the stories of Generation 1.5 in Italy who migrated to Italy at the age of 5-19 years, during their young formative years together with their families or later, via the family reunification procedure.

Migrant people already are in the position of extreme vulnerability in their new countries due to their legal and economic position, lack of family support, language competence and knowledge of local laws. Generation 1.5 representatives, who were born in different countries, migrated in a young age and are very well aware of the life “before” and “after” the big move, are one of the most vulnerable groups inside migrant communities, as they experience double vulnerability.

In their interviews they address the conditions of migration, their views on it and integration process – into school, neighbourhood and a new society. Through these interviews with young people, I also acquired information related to their family backgrounds, family life, prior conditions and their view of domestic violence.

While many studies focus on domestic violence from the point of view of the intimate partner violence (IPV), my study focuses specifically on young people stories and their experiences. Their views and reactions to separation and later re-meeting and re-acquainting to their parents (who, after a few years of separation, might seem like strangers), adapting and accepting new culture and social settings are very important for the understanding of domestic violence patterns.

The main research questions of this study deal with the lives and migration stories of Italian Generation 1.5 representatives, their parents and experts whom I interviewed.

### **Research Questions:**

- 1) Does the fact of migration influence the level of domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?
- 2) How the fact of migration influences the situation with domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?
- 3) Which types of domestic violence can migration trigger?

It aims to examine (1) the situation with domestic violence in migrant communities, (2) the main triggers for domestic violence in these communities, and (3) how migration influences the level of violence.

From this perspective I propose to study the realities of domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy to separate the stressors, connected to migration, study their indirect and direct impacts on migrant families.

## **Definition of Terms**

It is important to define several terms that will be used throughout this study. Some of them will be defined in the paragraphs.

**Domestic violence** - all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim (as defined by the Istanbul Convention, 2011). Domestic violence can take the form of physical violence and is often accompanied by mental or emotional abuse, which includes insults and verbal threats of physical violence towards the victim, the self or others, including children. Other definitions are looked into in the paragraph 1.1.

**Migration** – in the context of my research it should be understood as international migration. It refers to movement from outside the EU by people who are not citizens of any of the member states (Boswell and Geddes, 2011) for a period of 12 months or more temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons (IOM, 2008; IOM, 2019). It should be separated from the concept of EU mobility, which refers to EU-nationals employing their right to free movement inside the EU (Boswell and Geddes, 2011).

**Person with a migrant background** – people, who migrated to Italy at any age and for any reason. This term was also defined by the limitation in the data collection, which are explained in the following paragraphs.

**First generation** (G1.0) - persons born and socialized in another country who migrated as adults, even though this term frequently used in regards to all foreign-born migrants regardless of their age at arrival.

**Generation 1.5** (G1.5) - all people, born in a country, different from their current country of residence and migrated there from the age of 5-6 till the age of 18-19 with their families or following them (also as the result of family reunification, but not only). This definition, as well as definitions of other migrant generations, is further explained in the paragraph 1.4

**Generation 1.25** (G1.25) – those who arrive in their adolescent years (ages 13-17) on their own. Experiences of those who belong to Generation 1.25 are hypothesized to be closer to the first generation of migrants (Rumbaut, 2004). Hence, unaccompanied minors belong to G1.25.

**Generation 1.75** (G1.75) - people who arrive between the age 0 and 5 years and whose experiences of are closer to those of the native-born second generation, as they are mostly pre-school children who retain virtually no memory of their country of birth, were too young to go to school and to create a wide social network the0e and almost entirely socialised in the country their families migrated to (Ramakrishnan, 2004).

**Second generation** (G2.0) – people, born from two migrant parents in the country they migrated to.

**Generation 2.5** (G2.5) – people who were born to one parent born abroad and one born in their country of residence.

**Third generation** (G3.0) – a person with two native-born G2.0 parents (Rumbaut, 2004; Ramakrishnan, 2004)

## **Methodology**

My research is built on the interpretivism/constructivism basis, as I propose to research the social world through the interpretation by research subjects. And, as human perspectives and experiences are subjective, social reality may change and can have multiple perspectives (Hennink et al., 2011). Interpretivism rejects objectivism and believes that researchers need to interact with the participants of the study and have a dialogue with them to understand the social world from the experiences and subjective meanings that people attach to it. Interpretivists use narrative to describe specifics details of a particular reality they study (Neuman 2011).

Hence, I built my research on insider perspective and studied the social reality from the perspective of the people themselves, and I believe that the collection of data and its analysis is influenced both by respondents' and researcher's reality, experiences and perspectives.

This research is informed by feminist standpoint theory which suggests that research, particularly which focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized.

There are definitely certain limitations in the application of this theory, as in any case, all of the interviews with people who suffered, witnessed and, in some cases, caused violence, were reported by me. While I was doing my best to stay unbiased and present the findings of these research in an objective manner, without a doubt it was impacted and shaped by my personality and personal beliefs and values. I believe that this was unavoidable already because the researched was designed and the results were analysed by me, hence there couldn't stay completely unfiltered.

I used a qualitative approach, as it sees social reality as unstable and constantly changing, and as the creation of social actors and focuses on how individuals interpret their social world (Fortune et al., 2013).

The interviews and their analysis were informed also by the concept of phenomenology, that suggests that in a research of a phenomena the context and settings are as important as what had actually happened. Phenomenological research demands a "rich descriptions of phenomena and their settings" (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998; Kvale, 1996; Groenewald, 2004)

I was describing my case studies through a series of interview presented in a narrative format and the argument is constructed from the comparison of evidence I have gathered during my case

studies. The narrative format was the most adequate one, as I was analysing separate words and the narration line in order to understand order of events, elements of the stories, that the participants of the study were not sure about or were reluctant to discuss, as well as what was said during each interview and what wasn't. It was also the only possibility for me to give the respondents a voice in order to tell their stories, as most of them never had an opportunity to discuss their experiences with other people. From this point of view, I feel like the use of the narrative format helped me to highlight every story and analyse them better.

## **Data collection, analysis and reporting**

For the purpose of this research, I've conducted 21 semi-structured interviews (also known as the non-standardised or qualitative) - in-depth and either in-person or, in one specific case, via Skype.

The one time when I had to conduct an interview via Skype, it was justified by the fact that at that point me and the participant of the study were in different regions of Italy (I was in Palermo, where I reside, and the participant was in Milan, while planning a trip abroad). In this case it was the only way for us to actually have an interview in the timeframe of the field collection part of my research.

The bibliographical research was conducted from 2015 to 2018 in Italy and Belgium.

The field collection of data was conducted from 2017 to 2018 in Italy (Palermo, Turin, Bergamo).

Interviews are being conducted with two main groups:

a) individuals with migrant background (those, who suffered or witnessed domestic violence and conflict situations occurring in their families or in their communities) – 10 interviews with 11 individuals, 46% of the total amount of interviews and 45% of the total amount of respondents.

The participants of the study are aged from 24 to 60 years old. They are coming from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Peru, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Their selection process will be described in the next paragraph.

b) experts – 11 interviews with 13 individuals (social workers, community leaders, psychologists, lawyers), 52% of the total amount of interviews and 54% of the total amount of respondents

Out of the total number of respondents, 20 were female and 4 were male (83% and 17% respectively).

For data collection I used methodologies of qualitative research such as life story approach that is based on narratives about one's life or relevant parts thereof to interview people who suffered the violence, elements of phenomenological and cognitive interviews to interview those who witnessed violence.

I used open questions and, as all the interviews were semi-structured, the flow of each one of them was determined by the information that the respondent were providing.



Interviews were not limited in time and the lengths of each of them depended on the respondent. Due to many factors (schedules, commodity and wellbeing of the participants, availability of spaces) I was conducting interviews in various places – community centres, such as Casa del Quartiere in Turin, Moltivolti and Casa Mediterranea delle Donne in Palermo, bars, restaurants and coffee shops in Turin, Bergamo and Palermo, even participants' homes.

All the interviews were recorded and preserved to guarantee the solid record of data. Interviews were conducted in English and Italian, then transcribed and, if needed<sup>1</sup>, translated into English. It was done by me to insure full confidentiality of the respondents.

The interviews with the first category of respondents (individuals with the migration background) were focused on their experiences and reflections and were conducted using life story approach.

The interviews with the second group (experts) mostly related their work, experiences and the cases they have witnessed and/or assisted in, the overviews of communities with which they work, customs and cultural specificities (if they work with a particular community). These interviews were semi-structured as well, with the use of cognitive interview techniques.

To report the collected data, I used the narrative format to describe the interviews with the first group of participants. The descriptions were focused not only on the descriptions of the events and their chronology, but also on the context, settings, feelings of the respondents, words the respondents used.

## **Limitations in Data Collection**

In the process of networking, searching for subjects and setting the dates for interviews, I have had experiences major difficulties.

Overall during the three years that I've dedicated to my PhD research, I have contacted:

- More than 45 social centres, initiatives, associations, NGOs, amongst which there were: Le Onde, Sportello Antiviolenza Diana, ArciGay Palermo, faculties of Sociology and Anthropology at UniPa in Palermo, Circolo Maurice, Casa del Quartiere, Alma Terra/Alma Mater, La Casa delle Donne di Torino, Sereno Regis, Sant'Anna di Torino, Associazione Frantz Fanon, Sermig in Turin, various research center, help lines etc. all over Italy.
- More than 60 individuals – community leaders, social workers, scholars, pedagogists, psychologists, medics, cultural mediators, lawyers, as well as my personal contacts all over Italy.

In the end, out of all these contact efforts I received a positive response regarding interviews from 15 individuals with migrant background and 14 experts.

Out of this number of people two individuals with migrant background didn't show up on the day of the interview in the place we agreed upon, never contacted me again and also never replied to any of my messages.

Two others were constantly postponing the date of their interviews for the period of two and a half years and gave me the impression that they are not really willing to speak to me about their experience.

One of the experts also changed our meeting date many times due to her busy schedule and in the end told me that she doesn't think she can provide any contribution to my research.

Hence, I have conducted 10 interviews with 11 individuals who belong to G1.5 or have children who belong to G1.5 and 11 interviews with 13 experts. Also, due to the limited response from the contact efforts, the pool of selected participants became auto-defined – the people who gave me interviews eventually represent come of the biggest migrant communities in Italy and this in its own is already a very symptomatic result.

These numbers, however, were previewed since the beginning of the research, as I was expecting that many of the representatives of G1.5, their relatives and community leaders will be reluctant to speak about domestic violence due to:

- the delicateness of the subject – due to the subject being so delicate and personal, many of potential respondents were reluctant to give an interview.
- close-knit communities – due to the fact that some migrant communities are quite closed off and small (for example, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Sri Lankan), speaking even to one representative was proved to be difficult. Hence, a certain number of participants from these communities agreed to give me an interview because they no longer feel like they are parts of their communities.
- legal proceedings – there are existing non-governmental organisations that are helping children of the first-generation migrants who suffered from domestic violence in Italy. However, when I asked whether I can speak to someone about their experiences, my request was rejected due to the ongoing legal proceedings on all of the NGO's cases.
- problems with documents – on three occasions potential respondents explained to me that they don't want to speak about any negative experiences they have had in the past as they are applying for an Italian citizenship.
- security issues – some of the potential participants refused to give the interview because they were scared for their safety and the safety of their families.
- taboo – the topic of domestic violence is still very much a taboo and is considered to be shameful and forbidden.

The limited number of interviews with experts can be explained by the fact that due to the limited knowledge of the term G1.5, some of the interviews with experts regarded mostly the cases with the involvement of the representatives of G2.0 or G2.5. Another factor was the perception of domestic violence as equal to intimate partner violence. Hence, 5 of the interviews with experts were not used in the description of my research.

## **Overview of the thesis structure**

**Chapter 1** offers the overview of the literature on domestic violence and its effects on young people, as well as European and Italian legal framework on domestic violence. It also looks into this topic in the context of migration and introduces the concept of Generation 1.5.

**Chapter 2** provides the overview of recent researches and inquiries into the topic of domestic violence in migrant communities, as well as Generation 1.5 in Italy and in Europe in general. It provides the base for the further inquiries and defines the knowledge gap to explore. It also acts as the basis for future comparison.

**Chapter 3** presents the results of the current research and the individual study cases, with their specificities and limits. It summarises all individual and group interview findings both with people with migrant background and experts or “privileged witnesses”

**Chapter 4** summarises the thesis. It provides conclusions and recommendations for the policy makers, social workers and future researchers, who will work of the topic of domestic violence in the context of G1.5, its potential for future research and what remains to be studied.

## **CHAPTER 1. Domestic violence and Generation 1.5**

Migrant families in Europe are increasingly experiencing domestic violence and as they represent a vulnerable and marginalised part of the society, it makes researching of the phenomenon challenging.

The “Generation 1.5” – people that migrated at the age of 5-19 years, whether it’s with their families or following their family through the family reunification procedure (that can take a few years) – are one of the most vulnerable groups inside migrant communities. In the majority of cases they didn’t make a choice to migrate and took the fact of migration quite hard, as for them it meant leaving the familiar surroundings, school, friends and having to adapt to a new country, language and culture in a very young age. Many of them lived through an abandonment of a sort, as in many communities one or both of the parents migrate first, leaving their children with their relatives for as long as a few years, and after reaching the country of destination had to re-meet their parents.

This phenomenon creates new situations of vulnerability (double and triple) and conflicts, which, as the result, often leads to situations of domestic violence – direct and witnessed. Often young people also become the instruments in the hands of the perpetrator.

This chapter is looking into the definition of the concept of domestic violence and its effects on migrant population, especially on young people those belonging to so-called Generation 1.5.

## **1.1 Domestic Violence against young people and its causes**

### **Definition of Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence can be considered a universal phenomenon that can affect diverse populations - it knows no social, economic or national boundaries. It is one of the most common human rights violations and one of the biggest global problems.

Domestic violence is common, and in the majority of cases, victims are abused repeatedly over time (World Health Organization, 2002). Domestic violence occurs in every country and every culture (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002) and affects people throughout society, irrespective of economic status (Waits, 1985), regardless of their race, age, sexual orientation, religion, gender and whether the victim has a disability or not (Office of Violence Against Women, 2007).

Felson, Messner, Hoskin and Deane (2002) stated: “Domestic violence is traditionally among the least frequently reported crimes mainly due to trivialization, concerns for privacy, fear of reprisal, protection of the offender and perceptions that the police consider repeated domestic incidents to be unimportant”.

There is no universally accepted definition of domestic violence.

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), adopted by the General Assembly, defines domestic violence as “physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation”.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, manifests that “violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement”. It was endorsed by all the European Union states.

UK Crown Prosecution Service defines domestic violence as violence or abuse (either psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are intimate partners

(regardless of gender or sexual orientation), and between other people living in the same household as children, the elderly, sisters and brothers (UK Crown Prosecution Service, 2005).

General Assembly's resolution 61/143 (2006) recognizes that violence against women and girls persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of the enjoyment of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality, development and peace and stresses that "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

According to the US Office on Violence against Women, domestic violence is a "pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner" (Office on Violence against Women, 2007).

The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 14/12 of 18 June 2010 "Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: ensuring due diligence in prevention", recognized that violence against women has both short- and long-term adverse consequences for their health, including their sexual and reproductive health, and the enjoyment of their human rights, and that respecting and promoting sexual and reproductive health, and protecting and fulfilling reproductive rights.

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011), also known as Istanbul Convention, states, that "domestic violence" shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim.

As stated in the Explanatory report to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011), domestic violence against children is widespread and studies have revealed the link between domestic violence against women and child physical abuse, as well as the trauma that witnessing violence in the home causes in children.

Council of European Union on Combating Violence Against Women, and the Provision of Support Services for Victims of Domestic Violence (2012) sees gender-based violence (that includes also domestic violence) against women as violence that is directed against a woman because she is a

woman and defines women and girls as the main victims of gender-based violence. According to the Council Conclusions, women victims of such violence and children who witness it often require special support and protection because of the high risk of secondary and repeat victimisation. Violence against women affects society as a whole and it constitutes an obstacle to women's active participation in society and both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

For the purpose of this study I will be adopting the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011) definition, as it describes the phenomenon of DV to the fullest extent.

Domestic violence can take the form of physical violence and is often accompanied by mental or emotional abuse, which includes insults and verbal threats of physical violence towards the victim, the self or others, including children.

According to Brown and Hampson (2009), domestic violence can take form of (but is not limited to):

- physical violence (pushing, shoving, hitting, choking and beating with or without a weapon)
- sexual violence (rape, unwanted sexual practices, mutilation and coerced prostitution),
- intimidation (looks, gestures, smashing furniture, displaying weapons and harming pets)
- threats (to harm the partner, the children, others, property), emotional abuse (denigration, undermining)
- isolation (cutting off the victim from family, work and other networks)
- stalking (following, constant unwanted contacts, cyberstalking)
- financial abuse (unilateral control of money)
- spiritual abuse (control of religious expression).

For the purpose of this research, I have adopted this classification with the addition of the following types of domestic violence: endangerment, criminal coercion, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, child and forced marriage, trespassing, harassment, genital mutilation, human trafficking.

However, many of these forms are still not legally recognised as domestic violence acts, but they are regarded as separate behaviours and the relationship between them is not recognised.



## **Effects of domestic violence on children and young people**

Traditionally domestic violence is perceived as gender-based violence, and synonymized with situations, in which the perpetrator is more likely to be male and the victim is most likely to be female. But domestic violence against children and young people is also a form of oppression or control, based on patriarchal oppression in the family, culture and in society. In many cases children become witnesses and instruments of domestic violence, hence we cannot speak about child abuse without speaking about other forms of domestic violence. For the purpose of this study we use the term “domestic violence” to describe violence (witnessed or experienced) by Generation 1.5 representatives.

Men’s abuse of women is tightly interconnected with child abuse (Connolly et al., 2006; Cunningham & Baker, 2004; Edleson, 1999; Guille, 2004; Hester, Pearson & Harwin, 2000, Holt, Buckley and Whelan, 2008). Appel and Holden (1998) also concluded that the abuse of the child occurred with the abuse of their mothers in 40% of cases.

The violence against children can be a part of the abuse of their mothers, and vice versa (McGee, 2000), as in some cases it can serve as an instrument of violence – it might be the intention of the perpetrator to cause harm to the mother as the result of the abuse of the child.

The effects of violence on children and young people are long-lasting and can result in numerous negative effects on physical and mental health (Campbell, 2002), as well as those associated with children’s exposure to parental violence (Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003).

The impact of domestic violence is being calculated only now, and probably the full impact is still unknown, and current evaluations are therefore unreliable and underestimated. The effects of being exposed to domestic violence spreads through the whole social circle of the victim - to other family members, to the family networks, to the social institutions they use and to the community (Brown and Alexander, 2007).

According to Fantuzzo and Mohr (1999), children who experience domestic violence at home are at greater risk of having problems with integrating into the society than children who live in families without DV.

Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to show: (1) externalizing behaviours (such as aggressive behaviour and conduct problems); (2) internalizing behaviours (such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem); and have problems with (3) intellectual and academic functioning; (4) social development (social competencies with peers and adults, for example); and (5) physical health and development.

Hence, the effects of domestic violence on its victims (residents and migrants) prevents them from being full members of society and achieving their full potential as active citizens, and their contribution to social and economic reality is damaged (Kane, 2008).

As mentioned above, people exposed to domestic violence, often suffer from severe health effects which can include psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and low self-esteem. The research showed that the health consequences include death by homicide and suicide, life-threatening sexually transmitted infections, death or complications in childbirth, fractures and bruising, reproductive system injuries and illnesses, mental health illnesses such as depression, anxiety and traumatic and post-traumatic stress symptoms and more. (World Health Organization, 2005)

Domestic violence can cause children to feel limited in their ability to express themselves at home and in many social situations outside. Children victims of domestic violence also suffer physical and/or psychological effects which can be fatal and/or non-fatal (Pineiro, 2006).

Research also shows that children who experience domestic violence often turn to alcohol or drugs - abuse can contribute to development of drinking problems as a sort of a coping mechanism for posttraumatic stress symptoms (Ullman, 2003). Caetano, Field, and Nelson (2003) also state that exposure to domestic violence and childhood abuse can lead to self-medication with alcohol in order to cope with problems. And alcoholism increases the risk of adolescent sexual assault and violent behaviours in the future.

Moreover, children who experience domestic violence often become violent and abusive adults (UNICEF,2008). Domestic violence is prevalently a male problem, the majority of perpetrators are male and between 40% and 70% of men who are violent towards their partners are also violent towards their children (Kane, 2008) - usually a violent husband is also a violent father (Edwards, 2000).

Witnessing domestic violence and living in the household with the violent father can negatively impact the relationships between the mother and the children – the woman will struggle to keep the authority and control, and the children might show aggression towards their parents (Jackson, 2003).

Women that suffer from domestic violence are often more prone to become physically violent towards their children. This violence can be the manifestation and the way to cope with their own abuse or as the result of the perpetrators order (Holden, Stein, Richie, Harris, and Jouriles, 1998).

And young victims of domestic violence can contribute to the cycle of violence in their adult lives – as a victim or as a perpetrator (Levendosky and Graham-Bermann, 1998). The model of abusive and violent relationships that young people see in childhood may translate into violence and aggression towards their future partners in men and depression and victimization on the part of women in their adult relationships (Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, Semel and Shapiro, 2002; Edleson, 1999)

## Causes of Domestic Violence

The definition of causes, contributing factors, and risk factors of domestic violence are important for several reasons – to deepen our understanding of what is domestic violence, for effective prevention, as the basis and support for new laws, to form public's opinion on the topic (Worden and Carlson, 2005).

Researchers agree that there is no one single factor that is responsible for domestic violence (Carlson, Worden, van Ryne, & Bachman, 2003).

Domestic violence is often explained with low education level, with traditional lifestyle or fundamental religious values, low economic income.

I chose to look into the causes and factors, contributing to escalation of domestic violence through the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Carlson, 1984) that defines four levels, important to analyse to understand the causes of domestic violence:

- **Individual level**, that consists of personal attitudes, values, and beliefs learned in one's family of origin; personal resources, skills, and abilities; subjective perceptions of reality and views of the world; and personal weaknesses, problems, and pathologies.

One of the major causes, frequently named by many researchers, is alcohol abuse (Ullman, 2003). It is more closely linked to murder, rape and assault than any other substance and found to be a contributing factor in incest, child molestation, spousal abuse and other family violence, with the percentage of men who assault their partners while under the influence of alcohol ranging from 48 to 87% (Lipsky, Caetano, Field and Bazargan, 2004).

But even though it is proven to be a contributing factor, alcohol can seldom be the only cause of domestic violence and abuse. Instead, an alcohol problem tends to interact with other aspects of the person's circumstances - stress at work, unemployment, or marital problems - to contribute to the violent outcome (Carlson, 1984, Gentemann, 1984; Koski & Mangold, 1988).

A very significant role in the patterns of domestic violence is played by personality characteristics of the perpetrator (Davis & Carlson, 1981; Koski & Mangold, 1988; Yick & Oomen-Early, 2008).

Here we also see so-called "status incompatibility" (self-esteem of the assailant and/or the victim) and the need for power, control and dominance within the family.

- **Family level**, that focuses on the nature of family life and organization, including family role structure and interactional dynamics. This relates to the family patterns that people accepted from their family of origin. According to Carlson and Davis (1979), there are a number of characteristics of the family as a social unit that tend to predispose it to conflict and tension as compared with other similar social groupings: sex, age, ability, and access to resources. All of these factors contribute to a high potential for disagreement and conflict. On this level we see a significant influence of the position that family has in community, its status in the society and its interaction with society.

- **Social-structural level**, related to social institutions both formal and informal. On this level we look into economic realities and trends, such as level of unemployment, distribution of assets in society etc, as well as law enforcement practices, judicial system.

Some researchers, for example Davis & Carlson (1981), Gentemann (1984) and Koski & Mangold (1988) state that many respondents in their studies referred to household stress, financial hardship, and unemployment increase as to the family violence risk factors. Numerous studies suggest that poor families are more likely to be affected by domestic violence (Buckner, Bearslee, & Bassuk, 2004; Kruttschnitt, Gartnerb and Ferraroc, 2002). Belsky (1980) has addressed the issue of unemployment as a factor related to child abuse.

This also defines migrant condition as a risk factor: studies show that migrants in Europe get menial jobs that are dangerous and poorly paid and lack of opportunities for career advancement more than residents (Burgio, 2007).

There is also a direct correlation between poverty and poor educational achievement, with fewer resources and low-achieving classroom environments increasing children's behaviour problems (Keegan Eamon, 2001).

Obviously, since not all poor families resort to violence, poverty is not a sole cause of domestic abuse. Rather, it is one of the contributing factors, that adds the stress and tension created by insufficient material resources (Worden and Carlson, 2005)

- **Sociocultural level** that focuses on societal norms, cultural values, and beliefs systems that exist in society, for instance sexism, sex-role stereotyping, general acceptance and normalization of domestic violence, and norms about the family as a social institution in general. One of the factors that is important to look into on this level is traditional lifestyle – being a part of a family-centred

network and having very few, and as a result, very weak contact and connections with people outside of the family. But, according to Menjivar and Salcido (2002), cultural factors were not the only reason for abuse. Linguistic barriers, isolation from (or contact with) family and community, economic status, legal status, governmental and local responses to domestic violence were also significant causes among immigrant populations.

Therefore, the ecological model allows us to conduct analysis on four different levels, see the interaction between different factors within and across levels and analyse violence as it occurs over time or at a given point in time.

These attributes provide us with a rich and multidimensional view of the causes, and therefore allow for deeper analysis and understanding of the topic.

## 1.2 European legal framework on Domestic Violence

### Domestic violence in the EU legal framework

Overall, the European policy concerning domestic violence appear insufficient yet (European Women's Lobby, 2010), and governed by “soft law” documents.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace was officially adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing during 4 – 15 September 1995, and signed by all the member States of the European Union.

The Declaration outlined specific measures for protection and support of the victims. According to this Declaration, the State should:

- «provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as, appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence».
- «establish linguistically and culturally accessible services for migrant women and girls, including women migrant workers, who are victims of gender-based violence».
- «recognize the vulnerability to violence and other forms of abuse of women migrants, including women migrant workers, whose legal status in the host country depends on employers who may exploit their situation».
- «organize, support and fund community-based education and training campaigns to raise awareness about violence against women as a violation of women's enjoyment of their human rights».
- «organize and fund information campaigns and educational and training programmes in order to sensitize girls and boys and women and men to the personal and social detrimental effects of violence in the family, community and society».
- «disseminate information on the assistance available to women and families who are victims of violence».

The Beijing Platform of Action also outlines the importance of supporting governmental and non-governmental organisations in their work against gender-based violence.

The Declaration defines the list of actions to be taken by the governments, amongst which are:

- to formulate and implement, at all appropriate levels, action plans to eliminate violence against women.
- allocate adequate resources within the government budget and mobilize community resources for activities related to the elimination of violence against women, including resources for the implementation of action plans at all appropriate levels.

In 1999 the European Parliament criminalized domestic violence in the EU Member States and called on them to “make domestic violence against women, including rape within marriage and sexual mutilation, a criminal offence and to set up services to help women who are victims of this kind of violence.”

Additionally, in 2001 the Council of Europe established the minimum rights of women and children victims of domestic violence, such as respect and recognition, hearings, and provision of evidence, right to receive information, specific assistance, protection, compensation, penal mediation and others. (EU Council Framework Decision of 15 March 2001)

In 2006, the Resolution 1512 (2006) concerning domestic violence against women was adopted by the European Parliament. With this Resolution the EU Member States were called to take a series of appropriated measures in order to improve victims’ protection and support by introducing effective methods of prevention and punishment (UN Women, 2012).

During the Conference on the EU Constitutional Treaty in 2007, a new Declaration was elaborated, that stated that «the Conference agrees that, in its general efforts to eliminate inequalities between men and women, the Union will aim in its different policies to combat all kinds of domestic violence. The Member States should take all necessary measures to prevent and punish these criminal acts and to support and protect the victims» (CIG 15/07).

On 26 November 2009, the European Parliament adopted the Resolution on the elimination of violence against women where it called upon the EU Member states to “to improve their national laws and policies to combat all forms of violence against women” and pointed out the need for a comprehensive legal act to combat all forms of violence against women.



In 2010, the European Commission drew out the Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-15, that is focused on gender-based violence as one of the cornerstone problems that needs to be addressed and resolved in order to achieve genuine gender equality (European Commission 2010)

Stockholm Programme (2010-2014) was one of the steps on the European Union's path to resolve the problem of violence against women, including domestic violence. Article 2 "Promoting citizens' rights: A Europe of rights" calls upon the Commission and the Member States to introduce criminal legislation or other support measures necessary to protect victims of crime and representatives of vulnerable groups. (European Council. 2010)

Following its Action Plan Implementing the Stockholm Programme, the European Commission presented the "victims' package" (18 May 2011) that consists of two main instruments: the European protection order applicable in civil matters and a draft directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime. Both the European protection order in civil matters, which complements the adopted Directive on the European protection order in criminal matters adopted in December 2011, and the proposed new directive state that «a person should be considered a victim regardless of whether a perpetrator has been identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted and regardless of the familial relationship' and that 'victims need support and assistance even before reporting a crime». (European Commission, 2011).

On April 7 2011 the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). As of June 2017, it has been signed by 44 countries and the European Union and ratified by 23 countries – members of Council of Europe: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey.

The Convention defines violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination (article 3 (a)) and calls upon the countries to exercise due diligence and "take the necessary legislative and other measures to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, punish and provide reparation for acts of violence" (article 5). The Convention also establishes a series of offences that must be criminalized by any state that ratifies it, such as: psychological violence

(article 33); stalking (article 34); physical violence (article 35); sexual violence, including rape, explicitly covering all engagement in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person (article 36), forced marriage (article 37); female genital mutilation (article 38), forced abortion and forced sterilisation (article 39) and sexual harassment (article 40).

As measures of protection and support the Convention defines: availability of information (article 19), general support services (article 20), assistance in individual/collective complaints (article 21), specialist support services (article 22), shelters (article 23), telephone helplines (article 24), support for victims of sexual violence (article 25), protection and support for child witnesses (article 26), reporting, also by professionals (articles 27 and 28).

However, there are no strict EU measurements/rules concerning domestic violence imposed on Member States by the EU. Notwithstanding, all EU Member States have clear recommendations concerning domestic violence that cannot be neglected. Current legislation does not recognise the internal diversity of the issue and does not provide further differentiations with regard to women, such as disability, age, migrant status, minority/ethnic group status (European Women's Lobby 2010).

## **Domestic violence in Italian legal system**

There is no clear and full definition of domestic violence in Italian law system. The concepts of violence and family, however, appear in Italian penal system several times, with contents and extensions varying according to the context.

As in Italy domestic violence is considered a criminal offence, it can be prosecuted based on three articles of the Italian Criminal Code.

They are the following:

- article 154 - paying pay alimony to the victim, especially in cases when the perpetrator is the only one who receives a salary.
- article 570 - imprisoned for one year and a fine of up to 103,000 Euros.
- article 572 - imprisonment from one up to five years,

One of the weak points of the Italian Criminal Code is that it doesn't recognise the variety of forms in which domestic violence can appear. It does contain the articles, necessary for addressing physical violence such as beating (article 581), personal injury (article 582), private violence (article 610), housebreaking (article 614), abuses (article 572).

Sexual violence is defined by law n.66 of 15 February 1996 "Norme contro la violenza sessuale" ("Norms against sexual violence") and by law n.269 of 3 August 1998 "Norme contro lo sfruttamento della prostituzione, della pornografia, del turismo sessuale in danno di minori, quali nuove forme di riduzione in schiavitù" ("Norms against the exploitation of prostitution, pornography and sex tourism involving children as new form of slavery").

Economic violence can be addressed and punished as the violation of the obligations of family assistance, but it is almost exclusively applied as the «lack of subsistence means to minor descendants, or unable to work, or to ascendants or spouse, who is not legally separated for his guilt» (article 570).

Psychological violence is quite difficult to address, even though, it, as well as other forms of violence, can be linked to the forms of crime described in many articles of the Criminal Code. Some of them are: breach of the obligations of family assistance (article 570), abuse of the means

of correction or discipline (article 571), abuse in the family or to the children (article 572), murder (article 575), induction or assisted suicide (article 580), beating (article 581), personal injury (article 581), mutilation of the female genital organs (article 583-bis), insult (article 594), defamation (article 595), kidnapping (article 605), sexual violence (article 609/bis), sexual group violence (article 609g), private violence (article 610), threat (article 612), acts persecutors or stalking (article 612/bis), breach, subtraction and suppression of correspondence (article 616), illicit cognition, interruption or impediment of telegraphic communications or conversations by telephone (article 617), installation of equipment designed to intercept or prevent communications or conversations by telegraph or telephone (article 617/bis), harassment or annoyance to persons (article 660).

It is important to note that there are no effective provisions set by law concerning the punishment of the perpetrator and guarantee the protection of the victims. One of the greatest deficiencies of Italian legislative system is the lack of an organic law that could've successfully victims of crimes. The Criminal Code provides a large variety range of rights for the defence of perpetrators, and much less rights and options for the victims of crimes. Hence, any complainant has to be aware that after proceeding with a charge they will not be granted any kind of protection and security.

Apart from the Italian Criminal Code, the legal framework on domestic violence consist also of specific laws and international conventions.

In 1985, Italy ratified CEDAW, or United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

This Convention defines discrimination against women as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field”.

It calls upon the States to condemn discrimination against women in all its forms and to ensure the equal treatment of women by all public authorities and institutions. It also requires the States to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, and states that both men and women have the right to “freely to choose a spouse and to enter into

marriage only with their free and full consent”. It claims the betrothal and the marriage of a child as actions that “will have no legal effect” (article 16).

The concept of “violence in domestic and familiar sphere” entered into the Italian law system only in 2001 with the adaptation of law n. 154 of 4 April 2001 “Misure contro la violenza nelle relazioni familiari” (“Measures against violence in familiar relations”).

The law enlarged the previously limited concept of violence, and stated that domestic violence is “serious injury to moral or physical integrity or to the freedom of the other spouse or domestic partner”. However, this law didn’t create any new penal circumstances for offenders – it only enriched the existing trial instruments, that were already at disposal of penal and civil judges, by adding the personal precautionary measure of “Order of protection against family abuses” (article 342-bis) to the Civil Code and the “Removal from family house” to the Code of Criminal Procedure (article 282-bis). (Sunia Geel 2: State of the Art Report, 2014)

It is referring to those cases when a perpetrator demonstrates violent and dangerous behaviour against a person, that can put at risk his/her psychophysical health and/or freedom. Depending on the seriousness of the behaviour and the occurrence of a crime, the victim can consider to go either to the Civil or to the Criminal Court. The Criminal Court can satisfy the request of protection.

According to this law in the cases like this (when there was a proven fact of domestic violence), the individual protection measures can be:

- the order to stop violent behaviour;
- the removal of a violent person (spouse, partner or another member of the family from home for a period of time and the prohibition of approaching without permission of the Court – even when the perpetrator is the sole owner of the property
- the prohibition to approach the places usually frequented by the victim of violence (workplace, home, school etc.)
- during the period of removal, the violent person has to pay a maintenance allowance to his wife and children if needed.

The law enforcement officers, responding to the call about the occurrence of domestic violence, however, cannot directly apply this law. It is applied only by Court following the required

procedure. The law doesn't oblige the victim to be assisted by a lawyer, but it is the right of the violence perpetrator to have a legal defence.

In 2007 the Ministry for Equality, in collaboration with Italian NGOs, institutions working in the field of domestic violence and women members of the Parliament, developed an effective law against gender violence called "Misure di sensibilizzazione e prevenzione". Due to the change of government in April 2008, this law was never put into force, except for some parts such as the anti-stalking law and the law against homophobia, including them in the act "On security".

In November 2010 the National Plan against Gender Violence and Stalking was adopted. It aims at involving all actors at local and national level and provides tools for specific actions in the socio-cultural, health, economic, legislative and judiciary fields. It is not only a support and coordination tool for the implementation of practices, but it also provides a framework for all the interested subjects (institutional and non-institutional).

The Plan's objectives are:

1. to prevent of all types of violence and to raise public awareness on this issue;
2. to empower Anti-violence Centres and Services and to provide trainings for operators;
4. to effectively monitor the phenomenon of gender-based violence;
5. to provide assistance and support to the victims of gender violence.

Italy signed the Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and domestic violence on 27 September 2012 and ratified it on 10 September 2013. On 1 August 2014 The Convention entered into force upon being ratified by 10 parties, including 8 Member States of the Council of Europe. As was discussed previously, aims of the Convention are: protection of women from every form of violence; elimination of discriminations to reach gender equality; promotion of international cooperation and the disposal of policies for protection and assistance in favour of the victims of violence.

Recently, on 15 October 2013, the law n. 119 «Disposizioni urgenti in materia di sicurezza e per il contrasto della violenza di genere, nonche' in tema di protezione civile e di commissariamento delle province» ("Urgent provisions in security matters and the fight against gender violence, as well as in the field of civil protection and law enforcement in provinces") was approved. It is also

known as “the femicide law”, as its main objective is to guaranty protection to women victims of domestic violence in the face of the devastating phenomenon of "femicide".

The most important statements of this law are:

- police custody, prison and more severe imprisonment terms for the perpetrators;
- removal from home of the perpetrator even if it's the husband;
- irrevocable complaint;
- free legal aid for the victims;
- granting residence permits for foreign victims of violence.

As the conclusion, I can state that Italian legal system is not fully equipped to address the issue of domestic violence in its variety of forms yet. It's lacking the distinct definition of domestic violence, as well as effective provisions set by law concerning the punishment of the perpetrator and guarantee the protection of the victims.

But it is developing and the new necessary laws are being created in the last 6-7 years. It shows positive dynamic of legal system development.

## **1.3 Domestic violence and migration**

### **Immigrant context of domestic violence**

As stated above, domestic violence is a universal phenomenon that can affect diverse populations without regards to social, economic or national differences. It is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in today's society, and one of the biggest global problems.

It can potentially affect any person, but in some cases, we can speak about double- or even triple vulnerability to domestic violence and of intersectionality of certain identity categories that can put people at greater risk of DV. Social status, low income, difficulties with obtaining a permit of stay or citizenship, absence of social ties make migrant population, especially women and children/minors more exposed to the possibility of abuse.

Although many studies on immigrant women have been carried out over the years, research concerning immigrant victims of domestic violence, especially in Europe, still remains limited (Avni 1991; Dobash and Dobash 1979; Dobash et al. 1992, Menjivar and Salcido, 2002).

According to Menjivar and Salcido (2002) there is a direct link between domestic violence and immigration. "The experiences of migrant people in domestic violence situations are often exacerbated by their specific position as immigrants, including limited host-language skills, lack of access to dignified jobs, uncertain legal statuses, and experiences in their home countries, and thus their alternatives to living with their abusers are very limited [...] These factors are identified in studies of immigrant women and domestic violence to one degree or another, where it is argued that they serve to prevent early intervention and/or reinforce strategies used by the perpetrator for control". It's safe to say that other migrant victims of domestic violence, such as children (minors, young people) and elderly, are exposed to the same risk factors and layers of vulnerability.

"These immigrant-specific conditions are superimposed on other systems of oppression, such as class, race, and ethnicity, to further increase immigrant women's vulnerability to domestic violence" (Menjivar and Salcido, 2002). According to Watts and Zimmerman (1997), physical and sexual domestic violence is very often accompanied by emotionally abuse, isolation from family



members and friends, insults, humiliation or intimidation; economic restrictions such as prohibiting from working, or confiscating victim's earnings; and other controlling behaviours.

Research showed that physical assaults on women and children occur at all social and economic levels. However, this type of violence is frequently and wrongly seen as an integral part of specific cultures and traditions (Menjívar and Salcido, 2002).

According to Nelson (1996), the stigma of domestic violence and the fact that it usually occurs “behind closed doors”, makes it almost impossible to understand the real statistics and the magnitude of this problem.

Menjívar and Salcido (2002) noted that, due to mass media's frequent reports of the cases of DV “in the context of specific demographics”, these reports create a common belief that domestic violence is a private and cultural phenomenon that doesn't require any response, intervention or prevention programmes (for example, Latin American, Asian and African communities in the US, Romanian and Moldavian communities in Italy).

As showed in Ferraro's (1989) research, police officers in USA viewed arrests in domestic violence situations among migrants (as well as among other groups such as LGBT and Native Americans) as “a waste of time” because violence was supposed to be “a way of life for these people”. Furthermore, the topic of domestic violence among migrants and its perception as a cultural specificity, that cannot be addressed or interfered with, allowed it to be used as an instrument for manipulations, used for anti-migrant rhetoric. With the rise of far-right parties in Europe in the last years, the ideas of migrants “importing violence with them” become more and more common (Ticktin, 2008)

However, many researches on the topic of migration and domestic violence showed that, even though specific cultural origins and belonging to a patriarchal society can be risk factors, the frequency with which domestic violence occurs amongst migrant people is not higher than it is among native population. What differs is the experiences of immigrant survivors of domestic violence are often very different due to their stories of migration, position and legal status in host society, level of language proficiency, lack of access to dignified jobs by family members, and pre-migration experiences (Menjívar and Salcido, 2002; Hass, Dutton, and Orloff, 2000; Raj and Silverman, 2002).

In the following section we will look into all of these differences more profoundly.

## **Migrant women and children's vulnerability to violence**

As was defined above, migrant victims of domestic violence have their own experience of domestic violence due to many risk factors. Most of them live within two often conflicting cultures and within a context in which they are isolated and viewed as other. So apart from all of the causes of domestic violence, that were discussed in previous sections, migrant women and children are often in situations of double (extreme) vulnerability.

The cases of injustice, abuse and violence that involve them should be analysed taking into consideration the concept of intersectionality – not as abuse of people with migrant background or only as a woman or a minor, but as a violent act against a migrant woman, a migrant minor or a minor underaged girl (Crenshaw, 1991, Bello, 2017).

I chose to look into the causes and risk factors through the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Carlson, 1984) that we previously used to define the general causes of domestic violence. Hence, I analysed the same four levels, important for understanding the specificities of migrant experiences:

- **Individual level**, that consists of personal attitudes, values, and beliefs. Here all the major causes, existing on the personal level, such as alcohol and substance abuse, status incompatibility and personal predisposition for violence, can be enhanced by risk factors, specific to lives of migrant populations.

Factors like language barriers, lack of education, lack of job skills necessary in the destination country, racial, ethnic and migrant discrimination, as well as lack of knowledge and perspective on the topic of violence and human rights, can make certain members more likely to turn to substance abuse, “family destructive behaviours such as gambling and infidelity” (Raj and Silverman, 2002) and later, to violence (Morash, Bui and Santiago, 2000).

At the same time, the same factors, can make other family members more vulnerable to victimisation and violence.

Amongst the risk factors we analyse on this level are sexual orientation and gender identity that add to the complexity of issues of domestic violence and migration. The recent research, conducted by Alessi, Kahn and Chatterji (2016) with LGBT youth, showed that participants were physically

and verbally abused by their parents when they were behaving not according to accepted gender norms (manner of speaking, dressing, their choice of recreational activities and friends).

- **Family level**, that focuses on the nature of family life and organization, including family role structure and interactional dynamics.

Migrant families, apart from their usual inter-family dynamic, in a foreign country also becomes a carrier of their cultures of origin. So, in this case we can speak about interlinking with the sociocultural level, as in this case the family is also a carrier of cultural norms and restrictions.

Cultural ideologies can help increase respect for certain members of a family and consequently decrease the likelihood of abuse (for example, respect for the mother). However, they can also serve to disempower family members and increase the likelihood of abuse (for example, the importance of a father's role and him having the right to the last word). Traditional gender roles have been proven to be a factor in abuse of women and young people in migrant populations (Raj and Silverman, 2002; Bui & Morash, 1999; Morash, Bui & Santiago, 2000; Perilla, 1999). For example, findings from studies of Middle Eastern immigrant communities indicate that both men and women feel that if women do not stay within their prescribed roles, it is culturally acceptable for men to "discipline" them using physical abuse (Kulwicki & Miller, 1999). Gender roles not only serve as a justification for abuse, but they also: increase women's and children's vulnerability to abuse by keeping them isolated, subservient to male partners/father figure, and, in case of women, self-sacrificing to community and family (Bui & Morash, 1999); placing responsibility for the family on females and economic responsibility on males (Morash, Bui & Santiago, 2000); reduce options for women's separation from an abusive spouse and maintain male economic control in family (Raj and Silverman, 2002); promote male dominance (Abraham, 1998; Morash, Bui & Santiago, 2000), increasing the possibility of abuse, infidelity and rape.

One of the important factors is isolation from family, friends and work as the result of migration (which can also be one of the steps in the cycle of violence). (Brown, Hampson 2009):

- **Social-structural level**, related to social institutions both formal and informal. As was defined in previous sections, on this level migrant condition is a risk factor: studies show that migrants in Europe get menial jobs that are dangerous and poorly paid and lack of opportunities for career advancement more than residents (Burgio, 2007, Valencak, 209). Economic insecurity of immigrants has also been cited as increasing environmental stress and the likelihood of abuse.

Many perpetrators also cause the victim's lack of economic stability (by prohibiting them to work, learn the language and necessary work skills, etc.) and later use it to assure the dominant position in the family (Raj and Silverman, 2002; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002, Watts and Zimmerman, 2002).

Amongst the other risk factors there is the question legal status in the destination country. Noncitizen immigrant women are recognized as being at increased risk for violence. For undocumented migrants, deportation is a constant threat that batterers can use against them. Many perpetrators, whose legal status in the country is more secure, engage in immigration-related abuse, manipulating with other risk factors, such as isolation, lack of language skills, lower levels of education or work experience (Raj and Silverman, 2002; Perilla, 1999). Perpetrators in this case can also keep, destroy, or threaten to destroy partners' or children's immigration documentation (Abraham, 1998), placing their victims at risk for deportation.

- **Sociocultural level** that focuses on societal norms, cultural values, and beliefs systems that exist in society, for instance sexism, sex-role stereotyping, general acceptance and normalization of domestic violence, and norms about the family as a social institution in general.

Some of the culturally specific forms of abuse were discussed on the family level, as migrant families in a new country become carriers of their own cultures.

The factors that are connected to the host society, include discrimination against migrants, as well as discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion and lifestyle, the vision of domestic violence as "a cultural norm" and refusal to intervene (Menjivar and Salcido, 2002; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Ferraro, 1989; Ticktin, 2008).

## **Restrictions and barriers for help seeking**

Much research shows that migrant victims of domestic violence are less likely to seek any support than non-migrant ones. This goes both for informal (speaking with community leaders, social workers, representatives of anti-violence centres) and for formal (medical help, legal consultations, talking to police) (Kulwicksi & Miller, 1999; Perilla, 1999; Raj and Silverman, 2002).

Raj and Silverman, after conducting a profound bibliographical review (2002), suggested that there are three major limitations that restrict migrant women from searching help for themselves and their children – culture, context and legal status.

Cultural factors are:

- lack of help and support from family and community. Many patriarchal cultures see domestic violence as an inter-family thing and encourage women and children to be quiet about it, listen to their husband/partner/father, to place family first and sacrifice yourself for it. Such community often put blame for domestic violence on victims for being too opinionated, un-obedient, “not good enough” and claim that the head of the family “knows better”. The same is true for many religious leaders – often they will pressure victims to stay in an abusive relationship because it’s their moral obligation to save the marriage and be silent about their family problems (Bui and Morash, 1999; Morash, Bui and Santiago, 2000; Perilla, 1999).
- concerns that social services will not be culturally sensitive. Victims are scared of being discriminated and criticized for their religious believes or cultural origins, as well as being put into protected housing, which to them means losing their children and being closed up in an unknown structure (Perilla, 1999).
- divorced women and abused children are stigmatized and shamed. Many communities alienate and stigmatize divorced women or people that speak publicly about abuse in their families for life for breaking the marriage vows, making children grow up without father and being “weak”. In more traditional cultures a situation like this can potentially lead to stigmatization of the whole family and affect other women’s (sisters’, nieces’) chances of getting married (Kulwicksi & Miller, 1999).

Amongst the factors, related to the migrant contexts, are:

- lack of knowledge about services and laws; fear of legal services, especially amongst refugees. Many victims don't know about the services or support systems they are entitled to, because they are not well acquainted with the life of the host country. They are also often unaware of laws that may protect them from abuse (Raj and Silverman, 2002; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002; Huisman, 1996, Bui and Morash, 1999; Kulwicki & Miller, 1999).

- language barrier. Lack of language skills keep many victims from reporting domestic violence, as well as seek medical treatments or legal help. Many of them are afraid of translators, if they are provided, because they might be men, carriers of the same values as a perpetrator or not be objective (Bui and Morash, 1999; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002, Huisman, 1996)

- lack of culturally tailored services. The staff of anti-violence centres, food, shelter and facilities they are providing might not meet victim's religious and cultural needs. They may use terminology less accepted by migrant populations (for example, rape) (Huisman, 1996). Huisman (1996) also suggests, that hotlines might not be an option for many victims of domestic violence, as they might not have necessary privacy in a family home.

Barriers, connected to legal status, are:

- fear of deportation due to undocumented status and lack of knowledge of laws. Undocumented migrants fear that if they ask for help, the health or social service provider will turn them in for deportation. Some research proved that even women with legal immigrant status sometimes feel vulnerable to deportation should they seek help – if their visas are tied to perpetrators' visas, as in cases of family reunification. (Abraham, 1998; Raj and Silverman, 2002; Huisman, 1996). Even after the adoption of the law n. 119 in 2013 in Italy, that grants residence permits to women-victims of domestic violence, many of them are not fully aware of their rights.

- fear of deportation for the perpetrator. Refugee women and young people may be particularly hesitant to report cases of violence if they might fear the deportation of perpetrator back to his country of origin where he might be a political prisoner or risk persecution and execution (Bui & Morash, 1999; Menjivar and Salcido, 2002).

## 1.4 The “1.5 Generation” and related risk factors

### Who belongs to Generation 1.5?

The term “Generation 1.5” was brought into use by Cuban-American sociologist Rubén G. Rumbaut in 1970 to describe people that migrated before or during their teens, as they don’t belong neither to first nor second generations of migrants. Many scholars don’t distinguish foreign-born persons who migrated as children from those who migrated as adults, or from people born in the destination country from one native-born and one foreign-born parents, treating them together as the de facto second generation. This is not correct as none of these conventional usages accurately captures the experience of youths who grew in one country and had to undergo second socialisation in another one (Rumbaut, 2004)

So, it is crucial to understand the way generation of migrants are recognised. According to Rumbaut (1997; 2004) and his followers, the generations should be divided in the following way:

- “first generation” migrant - persons born and socialized in another country who migrated as adults, even though this term frequently used in regards to all foreign-born migrants regardless of their age at arrival;

- “Generation 1.5” - foreign-born youths who migrated between the age of 6 and 12 (Rumbaut, 2004). They are pre-adolescent, primary-school-age children who have started their studies and socialisation in their mother tongues at schools abroad, but whose education is largely completed in the country they have migrated to. When Rumbaut first started using this term in 1970, it had a very broad meaning of “those who had immigrated after reaching school age but before reaching adolescence”. In his later works he defined the age and life stages of migration to develop also the concepts of “Generation 1.25” and “Generation 1.75”

- “Generation 1.25” and “Generation 1.75” - the terms, created by Rumbaut to differentiate between: 1) people who arrive between the age 0 and 5 years (Generation 1.75), 2) people, representing generation 1.5 and 3) those who arrive in their adolescent years (ages 13-17). Rumbaut stresses that experiences of Generation 1.75 are closer to those of the native-born second generation, as they are mostly pre-school children who retain virtually no memory of their country

of birth, were too young to go to school and to create a wide social network there and almost entirely socialised in the country their families migrated to. And vice versa, experiences of those who belong to Generation 1.25 - either attended secondary school after arrival or directly joined the workforce - are hypothesized to be closer to the first generation of migrants. According to Rumbaut, they may or may not come with their families of origin.

- “second generation” – born from two migrant parents in the country they migrated to.
- “Generation 2,5” – have one parent born abroad and one born in their country of residence.
- “third generation” – a person with two native-born parents. (Rumbaut, 2004; Ramakrishnan, 2004)

On the contrary, Favaro and Napoli (2004) suggest that Generation 1.5 in Italy consists of people who migrated at the age of 12-15 together with their families or after, as the result of family reunification. They stress out that this generation knew life before the migration and were to some point raised in another culture and moved during their formative years, even though didn't necessary chose to move.

Portes (1994) defined Generation 1.5 as foreign-born persons who migrated as children and whose socialization experience “is akin to that of the native-born of foreign parents”.

Zhou (1997) made an argument that even though Generation 1.5 is sometimes seen as first or “a new second” generation, it is not correct for many reasons: “The one-and-a-half generation, on the other hand, is sometimes broken down into two distinct cohorts: children between 6 and 13 years of age as 1.5-generation children and those arriving as adolescents (aged 13 to 17) who are similar to first-generation children. Although scholars may vary in their ways of defining the new second generation, they have generally agreed that there are important differences between children of different cohorts of the one-and-a-half and second generation, particularly in their physical and psychological developmental stages, in their socialization processes in the family, the school, and the society at large, as well as in their orientation toward their homeland”.

Yamaguchi (2005), by the term “Generation 1.5” means all people who immigrated during their early life stages and have lost their native-speaker competences or never attained it due to almost exclusive use of the host country's language.



Bartley and Spoonley (2008) described Generation 1.5 as “people who have migrated as children (6-18 years of age)”.

Davidson (2011) sees this generation as those, who was born in another country (or in another language community) but have received a large part of their formal education in the country of current residence.

Considering many factors, such as all the previously cited works and their argumentations, the difference between school systems in different countries, the experiences that participants of our study might have lived through before and after migration, family dynamics, the legal specificities of the Italian legal system (the fact that it is not possible to organise a family reunification with son/daughter, who are older than 18) and the predominant characteristics of migration in different communities (whether parents are moving to a new country with their children, or they leave them in their countries of origin to wait for the opportunity to organise a family reunification, who moves first – mother or father, and, accordingly, who in this case stays with children in the country of origin), for the sake of this research I’ve adopted the following definition of Generation 1.5:

It is all people, born in a country, different from their current country of residence and migrated there from the age of 5-6 till the age of 18-19 with their families or following them (also as the result of family reunification, but not only).

## **Characteristics of Generation 1.5 and related risk factors**

So, the Generation 1.5 are people born in country, different to their current country of residence and migrated in a young age following their parent(s) or together with them.

As their migration stories are very different from those of representatives of first generations, who migrated as adults, it is important to define the major characteristics of this generation and the added risk factors that together with the factors, described in previous sections, can put this young people in position of extreme vulnerability and make them victims of domestic violence.

For the purposes of this research, I've decided to divided the G1.5's major characteristics into advantages and risk factors, and look at this generation's particularities from a wide angle.

- a possibility to “fall onto” the second identity.

People that migrate between the age of 5 and 19 know the life “before” and “after” and after migration often face the necessity of accepting a new culture and balance it with their original culture, culture of their family. Many of them, due to their migration stories, develop a double identity, and some of them stated that it is great to have two countries and cultures of reference (Favaro and Napoli, 2004). This can also become a risk factor due to many circumstances, which will be looked into below.

- bilingualism.

As G1.5 representatives, due to their age of migration, usually remember their native language, and after the move learn also the language of their country of destination, this can be a great advantage for their future, intellectual development and career opportunities (Bloch, 2007).

- double citizenship.

Depending on the country of origin and the country of destination, belonging to G1.5 might also guaranty its representatives a double citizenship. This opens more learning and career opportunities for G1.5 and can be seen as a significant advantage for the future (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006).

- cultural openness and adaptability.

Growing up between two or more cultures, languages and/or religions can potentially make G1.5 representatives much more adaptable and open, as it develops their intercultural competences (Favaro and Napoli, 2004; Burgio, 2007; Bolognesi, 2008)

Amongst risk factors we can name:

- difficulties with the development of a “double identity”.

Many of them find it difficult to appreciate their new “double identity” without denying it. (Favaro and Napoli, 2004; Bartley and Spoonley, 2008; Ambrosini and Molina, 2004). This factor can potentially create conflict situations and predispositions for domestic violence.

- struggling with abandonment and separation anxiety.

As in many cases one or both parents choose to migrate first to create necessary condition for family reunification (find jobs, acquire necessary documents, collect funds to organize the move for their children), many of the representatives of Generation 1.5 live through abandonment. This is when they suffer the first separation – from a parent or parents that left. (Favaro, 2000; Favaro and Napoli, 2004; Aguilera-Guzmán, Salgado de Snyder, Romero and Medina-Mora, 2004)

- struggle to create new family dynamic and “re-meet” parents after years of separation.

Young people that joined their parents few years after they migrated to a new country, often struggle with accepting the authority and meet their parent in a new context – after years of separation this often means meeting strangers. The stressors become more significant, if the parents during the period of absence had more children in a new country. This all can be considered the second separation – the separation from mother and father idealized figures, that their children create during the period of separation (Favaro and Napoli, 2004; Aguilera-Guzmán, Salgado de Snyder, Romero and Medina-Mora, 2004).

- difficulties with the integration into a new scholastic system due to the difference in curriculums and lack of language skills.

Many representatives of this generation have difficulties with finding their place and adapting to new school system. Due to difference in approaches in different countries and the necessity to continue studies in a new language, many young migrants are at risk of being excluded from the group, scholastic system and not being able to catch up with their studies. The older is the person, the more difficult it will be. Many young people lose motivation and leave school, decide not to

continue their studies at a university (Rumbaut and Ima, 1988; Asher and Case, 2008; Favaro and Napoli, 2004) or choose schools that prepare them for less well paid and less prestigious jobs (Giusti, 2004).

This puts them in a very vulnerable position and restricts their social and support network.

- difficulties in communication with peers and staff.

Migrant youngsters lose all the connection from their previous lives and have to start everything from the beginning in the context of a new country during their formative years, also known as age of transition. Due to poor language skills, lack of the knowledge of the territory and to stereotypes and discrimination, existing in society, many young people are at risk of being socially excluded from the group.

One of the contributing factors is insufficient preparation of school staff and lack of specific competences. Many of them don't have the necessary knowledge of migrations paths, experiences and specific vulnerabilities that characterize migrant youth of Generation 1.5 (Favaro and Napoli, 2004). All of the above can contribute to growing frustration, isolate a young person from necessary social interaction and restrict them from potentially searching for help in the case of abuse.

- certain legal invisibility.

Susan B. Coutin (2007) observed that "individuals can be physically present but legally absent". In some sense Generation 1.5 struggles with this invisibility, because, even though some of them moved to Italy quite young and lived through most of their formative years here, they are still foreigners *de jure* and *de facto*. And, on the contrary to the second generation, there is no simplified procedure of applying for citizenship for them (Favaro, 2000).

Considering the arguments, presented in the previous sections of present dissertation, we can conclude, that representatives of Generation 1.5 are in position of triple vulnerability – as minors, as migrants and as migrants of Generation 1.5.

## CONCLUSIONS

Domestic violence can be considered a universal phenomenon that can affect diverse populations - it knows no social, economic or national boundaries. It is one of the most pervasive human rights violations in today's society, and one of the biggest global problems. It can take various forms: physical violence (pushing, shoving, hitting, choking and beating with or without a weapon), sexual violence (rape, unwanted sexual practices, mutilation and coerced prostitution), intimidation (looks, gestures, smashing furniture, displaying weapons and harming pets), threats (to harm the partner, the children, others, property), emotional abuse (denigration, undermining), isolation (cutting of the victim from family, work and other networks), stalking (following, constant unwanted contacts, cyberstalking), financial abuse (unilateral control of money), spiritual abuse (control of religious expression).

Children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to show aggressive behaviour and conduct problems; suffer from depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem; have problems in school and in social context and suffer from health issues.

I analysed the general causes of domestic violence through the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Carlson, 1984) on four levels – individual (alcohol abuse, personality characteristics of the perpetrator, status incompatibility), family (the position that family has in community, its status in the society and its interaction with society), socio-structural (household stress, financial hardship, unemployment, migrant status) and sociocultural (sexism, sex-role stereotyping, general acceptance, normalization of domestic violence).

Migrant context adds to vulnerability and enhances the chances of victimization. It also often creates the barriers for help seeking, because of system's imperfections, language barriers, lack of knowledge about rights and protection measures, etc.

Generation 1.5, or people, born in a country, different from their current country of residence and migrated there from the age of 5-6 till the age of 18-19 with their families or following them (also as the result of family reunification, but not only), have their own specific characteristics that add to their vulnerability to violence.

In conclusion, the profound bibliographical research shows that migrants of Generation 1.5 suffer from triple vulnerability – as minors, as migrants and as migrant minors and representatives of Generation 1.5.

The overview of both Italian and European legal framework shows positive dynamic over the past years, but still lack specific definitions, laws and protection measures as of now.

## **CHAPTER 2. Generation 1.5 in Italy**

During the several decades Italy became an important immigrant destination and currently is a home to many international communities.

To successfully research the Generation 1.5 in Italy it is important to analyse the statistical data and to understand the migration patterns out and into Italy from 1870 till present time. This analysis is the basis for the understanding of the processes of migration in Italy, of the different flows of immigrants, their origins and motivations.

This chapter is looking into the history of migration in Italy, as well as the statistical data on migrant children in Italian schools starting from 1980s. It also provides the analysis of the recent Italian researches on Generation 1.5 and migrant communities in general.

## 2.1 Italy - from emigration to immigration

### Italy as the leader of European emigration

For almost a century, from 1870 up until the middle of 1970s Italy was one of the leading European emigration countries (Bonifazi, Heins, Strozza and Vitiello, 2009). Between 1901 and 1913, almost 5 million Italians immigrated to the Americas, with an average annual flow of more than 360 thousand (Ferenczi and Willcox, 1929). According to Birindelli (1984), the overall number of Italian emigrants from 1876 to the early 1980s exceeded 26 million. Out of this amount 9 million chose to return back to Italy during the period from 1905 to 1981.

Bonifazi, Heins, Strozza and Vitiello (2009) identified six main stages of the evolution of Italian migration, based on the data from the works of Birindelli (1989) and Federici (1979):

- **Stage 1 (1876 - 1900)** – the period when the number of emigrants steadily grew from 100,000 a year in middle of 1870 to more than 300,000 a year in the end of the 1890s. This time period is characterised by the change of the migration vector in 1885 – from France, Germany, Switzerland, Austro-Hungarian Empire to the United States, Argentina and Brazil. The origins of migration also shifted – in the beginning of the said period the migration flows came predominantly from the North of Italy, but in the end of it the number of migrants from the South increased significantly.

- **Stage 2 (1900 - 1914)** – the peak of migration, when more than 600,000 Italians were emigrating each year with the absolute maximum of migrants (873,000) in 1913. The main destination countries on Europe were still France, Germany and Switzerland, but between 55 and 60 per cent of the total amount of migrants were moving to the Americas. Out of them more than three million settled in the United States. Migration from the South of Italy increased up to 50 per cent.

- **Stage 3 (1914 - 1918)** – the time period when the levels of migration significantly decreased mostly due to World War I. Additionally, a very important part in reducing and redirecting flows of Italian migrants (predominantly to South America) was played by the USA immigration laws. In 1917 with the introduction of the Literacy Act the US prohibited entrance to the illiterate people, reducing the number of eligible immigrants from southern Italy (Del Boca and Venturini, 2003)



- **Stage 4 (1918 - 1930)** – the time period from the end of the World War I and up until the moments when Fascist government's anti-migration policy that was applied progressively from 1924 till 1928 came into full force. During this stage the number of migrants from Italy to other European countries, predominantly France, increased, while the flow to the US decreased rather significantly. Birindelli (1984) stated that the main reason for this decrease were increasingly restrictive measures implemented by the United States government, starting with the Literacy Act of 1917 (mentioned above) and to the introduction of the quota system in 1921 (that significantly lowered the chances for Italians to enter the US).

- **Stage 5 (1930 - 1945)** – characterised by a strong decrease in emigration into the US, provoked both by the anti-migration policy implemented in Italy, by the Great Depression that began in 1929 and by the World War II. As the result, during this stage the level of migration from Italy was very low and mostly in the direction of other European countries.

- **Stage 6 (1945-mid-1970s)** - after the end of the World War II the levels of migration both in and out of Italy increased again, but they never reached the peaks of the beginning of the century. This period in Europe was characterised by two different flows of immigration – migrants coming from the territories, ceded during or after the War and those coming from ex-colonies. In the case of Italy, the first category were Italians who were leaving the territories, ceded to Yugoslavia. According to Pupo (2001) the amount of the migrants involved varies from 200,000 to 350,000 of people. The second category consisted of 206,000 refugees that came to Italy from its former African colonies – Ethiopia (55,000 refugees), Eritrea (45,000 refugees), Somalia (12,000 refugees) and Libya (almost 94,000) (Del Boca, 1984).

The levels of emigrations also increase. It was a clear choice of the Italian government, as emigration restarted as a result of numerous bilateral migration agreements with the various European (France, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Luxemburg, Great Britain) and non-European countries (Argentina, Brazil, Australia). 5.6million emigrants left Italy between 1946 and 1965, heading mostly for other European countries. In the point of view of region of origin, the major part of emigrants was coming from Southern Italy, when flows of emigrants from North-East Italy significantly decreased (Bonifazi, Heins, Strozza and Vitiello, 2009).

After the Second World War levels migration was significantly influenced by economic conditions in Italy and the main receiving countries (Pugliese, 2001; Pugliese, 2006). According to Pugliese's research, starting from 1960s, some European countries, namely Germany and Switzerland, set the precedent for the essential emigration patterns, when the workers were staying only for short periods of time and returning to their countries of origin upon the completion of their work. This is confirmed by migration flow statistics that shows high numbers of return migration flow. This period was characterised by an altogether different legal settings - since the creation of European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 citizens of Italy and Germany had the possibility to move freely between the six countries-members of the EEC, but Switzerland was adopting very strict control measures concerning migrants. France and Belgium also recruited a significant amount of labour migrants from Italy in the 1950s and 1960s (Fassmann and Muenz, 1994; Boswel and Geddes, 2011)

At the same time Italy was experiencing a significant increase in internal migration. With their economic and industrial grows Northern and Central Italy started experiencing a strong flow of labour migrants from South and North-East (Bonifazi, 1999, Bonifazi and Heins, 2000).

According to Golini (1974), from 1955 to 1970 24.8 million Italian citizens registered their change of address between different municipalities, with negative net migration for the South (more than - 2 million).

Hence, during this stage emigration from Italy was characterised by short-term migration, when time of working abroad were alternating with times spent home. Internal migration flows from South and North-East to North and Centre of Italy increased significantly, leaving Italian South in the situation of the negative migration balance. At the same time immigration to Italy consisted of two different flows – first one consisted of Italians who were leaving territories, ceded during or after the World War II to Yugoslavia and people, coming from ex-colonies of Italy, namely Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Libya.

The long period of mass emigration from Italy that began shortly after the unification of Italy, came to end in early 1970s, when due mainly to new restrictive policies that were developed by the main destination countries the foreign net migration balance became positive for the first time since 1870s.

At the same time Italy also reached an internal balance of migration between more and less economically advanced regions – the flows significant decreased.

Generally speaking, in 1970s Italian emigration patterns began to progressively resemble migration dynamics of other developed European countries of that time.

With the end of the sixth stage Italy started its transition from an emigration into an immigration country. This process and its characteristics will be discussed in the following section.

## **Immigration patterns in recent decades**

As was previously discussed, for almost a century Italy was one of the leading European emigration countries. However, the situation changed and in the second half of the 1970s Italy transitioned into a country of immigration with the new flows of migrants from Africa and, later, Central and Eastern Europe. Decrease in emigration and return migration also played a very significant role in this process.

Italy became an immigration country quite late. It started receiving significant immigrant flows after 1974 as the result of the oil shock, when a number of European countries (particularly Britain, Germany and France) closed their borders to new immigrants. This rechannelled the flows in the direction of Southern Europe (Fasani, 2010; Zincone, 2017).

The number of foreign residents in Italy progressively increased from 143,838 in 1970 to nearly 300,000 in 1980 to 500,000 in 1985 (Del Boca and Venturini, 2003). Zincone (2017) states that the first big flows arrived between 1984 and 1989 when approximately 700-800,000 people entered Italy. It is estimated that 300-350,000 of them entered and/or remained in Italy without a valid residence permit (Mauri and Micheli 1992).

The composition of the immigrant flows changes remarkably in the 1980s and 1990s. The number of European Union citizens decreased, while the proportion of immigrants from outside of the EU increased up to 86 per cent out of the total amount. The fastest growing groups were Eastern European (Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania), as well as African and Asian (mainly Philippine).

The gender composition indicated a small imbalance in favour of male immigration – 54,7 per cent of the total number of foreign residents were male. Female immigrants prevailed in Asian (Philippine) and Latin American groups (Brazilian, Peruvian), and male immigrants prevailed among the North and West African groups (Moroccans, Tunisians, Senegalese), as well as Eastern European (ex-Yugoslavia, Albania). As an exception, female migration still prevailed in some of the Eastern European (Romanians, Polish) and African (Somalia, Ethiopia) communities.

Young adults (18-39 years old) constituted the biggest age group with 65,2 per cent of total presence (Bonifazi, Heins, Strozza and Vitiello, 2009).

In the 90s these numbers increased further and from 781,000 in 1990 rose to one million in 1995 (Del Boca and Venturini, 2003). One of the migration flows in 1999 was connected the refugee crisis in Kosovo, as that year Italy absorbed 11 per cent of Kosovar refugees, evacuated from the region to EU (van Selm, 2002; Boswell and Geddes, 2011)

The 2001 census showed that out of the 1,334,900 foreign residents counted at that time 28.6 per cent in the 25-34 years age group, followed by the age groups of 35-44, 0-14 and 15-24. In previous years immigration was significantly “younger” with 33.4 per cent of the 25-34-year olds, 30.4 percent of 15-24-year olds and 17.4 per cent of people aged between 0 and 14 years.

46.6 per cent of respondents named work as the main reason for immigration to Italy, 36.5 per cent moved due to the presence of family members.

The period from 2002 to 2006 was also characterized by high (foreign) immigration and an annual net migration flow of 439,000 people. This amounts to an average yearly migration gain of about 7.6 per thousand inhabitants (Bonifazi, Heins, Strozza and Vitiello, 2009). At the same time the International Organization on Migration’s report on world migration states that in 2005 Italy hosted approximately 700,000 migrants (IOM, 2008). According to the data presented in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report (2008) 42 per cent of permanent migration into Italy was family related (OECD, 2008; Boswell and Geddes, 2011)

According to ISTAT data, on January 1, 2007 there were 2,938,922 registered foreign citizens in Italy (1,465,849 women and 1,473,073 men), and the positive net grows compared to 2005 accounted to 10.1 per cent (268,408 people). Out of this number 54,318 people were born in Italy to foreign parents.

In 2008 the number of foreign residents was registered at 3,891,295, which amounted to 6,5 per cent of total population. The growth between 2007 and 2007 was registered at 13.4 per cent (458,644 people). The majority of new arrivals came from the countries, that were “new additions” to the European Union (mainly Romania), Eastern European countries that were not a part of the EU, as well as Morocco, China, India and Bangladesh.

The same report (ISTAT, 2007) states that second generation of migrants constitutes up to 13,3 per cent of the total foreign population. According to ISTAT’s data, in 2006 there were approximately 862,000 minors of foreign origin in Italy. The main part of them was born in Italy (about 519,000) and the rest (343,000) came to Italy following their parent (ISTAT, 2007).

In 2009 foreign population of Italy increased by 343,000 people. On January 1, 2011 there were 4,570,317 registered foreign citizens – 335,000 people more than in 2010, which amounts to 7,9 per cent. The number of foreign residents in 2010 increased mainly due to immigration (425,000 people) and foreign children, born in Italy (78,000, that equals to 13,9 per cent of the total number of children born in Italy). ISTAT's report "La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1° gennaio 2011" concludes that the percentage of foreign citizens in respect to the total number of residents (Italian and foreign) continues to grow: on January 1, 2011 it increased up to 7,5 per cent in respect to 7 per cent registered in 2009. The biggest foreign communities are Romanian, Albanian, Moroccan, Chinese and Ukrainian.

At the same time Eurostat signalizes the decrease in acquisition of Italian citizenship by foreigners – in 2011 56,200 of them received Italian passports, which is 15 per cent less than in 2010 (Eurostat, 2013).

Between 2011 and 2012 the number of foreign citizens in Italy increased by approximately 102,000 people. The most represented communities are Morocco, Albania, China, Ukraine and the Philippines.

Minors amounted to 23,9 per cent of the foreign population in 2012, which is 2,4 per cent more than in 2011. Up to 60 per cent (approximately 500,000) of them were born in Italy (ISTAT, 2012).

In 2013 the number of foreign citizens residing in Italy increased by 3 per cent (110,000 people). ISTAT's data shows that on December 31, 2013 8.1 per cent (4,900,000) of the population of Italy consisted of foreigners. In the total amount of foreign population, the most represented communities were Moroccan, Albanian, Chinese, Ukrainian and Philippine. The minors were still amounting to 23.9 per cent of all foreigners.

The data shows that for the first time the number of foreign citizens born in Italy decreased by 2,189 persons.

In 2014 the number of foreigners in Italy over exceeded 5 million which amounted to 8,2 per cent of the total population. The natural movement of the population (born minus dead) showed a negative dynamic peak (-100,000) for the first time since the World War I. This happened mainly due to a significant decrease in birth (-12,000), both amongst native and foreign population (2.638 less foreign children in comparison to 2013).

The number of officially registered foreign residents in 2015 almost didn't change compared to 2014 – according to ISTAT and the Ministry of Internal Affairs they total number of foreigners was 3,931,133 people. The most represented countries remained the same - Morocco (510,450), Albania (482,959), China (333,986), Ukraine (240,141) and India (169,394).

For the first time since the early 1990s the female presence decreased (Italian government issued 6,742 residence permits less than in 2015).

## **2.2 Italian Generation 1.5 – who are they?**

### **Generation 1.5 in numbers**

Many Italian scholars while speaking about second generation, as well as Generations 1.75, 1.5 and 1.25, chose to use the umbrella term “seconde generazioni” (“second generations”). Roberta Ricucci and Fredo Olivero (2008) chose to call them also “generazioni in movimento” (“generations on the move”). Anthropologist and educator Graziella Favaro refers to Generation 1.5 as “le ragazze e i ragazzi delle “terre di mezzo” (“girls and boys from “middle lands”) to address the specificities of the phenomenon and the dual personality and identity that some of these people carry (Favaro, 2000; Favaro and Napoli, 2004).

In the past years a number of researches on second generations took place in Italy.

But before we proceed to analyse them, it's important to understand who belongs to Italian Generation 1.5, how big is it and which specific characteristics it possesses.

ISTAT's first official statistics on foreign students showed the amount of 6,104 students in school for the 1983/1984 school year, which amounted to a very small percentage of all students (0,06 per cent).

During 1980s the increase in the number of a foreign students remained relatively low. However, in the first half of the 90s, the number of foreign students started growing with the rate of 5,000-6,000 people a year and the total amount over exceeded 50,000 for the 1995/1996 school year.

In the second part of the 90s the flow of foreign students intensified. The crisis in ex-Yugoslavian republics and Albania, the proximity of Italy to the line of the conflict, commercial expansion of Eastern Asia and the need for North African population to search for better opportunities resulted in new flows of adult migrants, and, accordingly of children of school age. Hence, the number of school children of foreign origins increased due to family reunions on one hand (especially after the regularizations of 1998 and 1999), and the steady growth of births immigrant children on another.



In 1996/1997 the number of foreign students increases by more than 7,000 persons and between 13,000 and 34,000 per year in the period from 1997/1998 to 1999/2000. Hence in the beginning of 2000s the number of immigrant students was registered at approximately 147,500 people.

The levels of migration continued to grow steadily during the first decade of the 2000s. Hence, in 2006-2008 ISTAT's statistical research needed to address not only the numbers of migrant population, but also its division by gender and age, as well as countries of births and citizenship.

These years Italy was the number one destination for migrants fleeing from crisis areas (Nigeria, Somalia, Eritrea) and for many migrants from Eastern Europe (particularly from Romania), number of which was also increasing following Romania's accession to the European Union.

In the 2004/2005 school year foreigners amounted to approximately 371,000 students (Borrini and De Sanctis, 2017).

In 2006 there were approximately 862,000 minors of foreign origin in Italy. The main part of them was born in Italy (about 519,000) and the rest (343,000) came to Italy following their parents (ISTAT, 2007). According to the data, presented by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 2006, the statistics on the place of their origins were following: Europe (312,000 or 37,3 per cent), Africa (300,000 or 34,8 per cent), Asia (185,000 or 21,5 per cent), Americas (56,000 or 6,4 per cent) and in the last place Oceania (with very insignificant percentage).

Through the lens of countries of origin: Morocco (150,000, that equals to one sixths part of all minors), Albania (125,000 or a bit more than one seventh part), Romania (73,000), China (59,000), Tunisia (39,000), Egypt and Philippines (32,000 each), Serbia and India (27,000 each), Macedonia (23,000), Sri Lanka (21,000) and Bangladesh (20,000) (Dossier Caritas, 2009).

Until 2007 ISTAT was analysing the data on foreign citizens holding a valid residence permit from the Ministry of the Interior. However, since 2008 it started working with the new data on residence permits that also includes minors registered on an adult's permit. This allowed to acquire valuable information on minors in relation to the characteristics of an adult on whose permit they are registered.

Data, presented in Dossier Caritas (2009) shows that the major part of minors with foreign origins in 2007-2008 lived in Lombardi (219,584 persons or 25 per cent of the total amount), Veneto (110,355 or 13 per cent), Emilia Romagna (94,344 minors, 11 per cent) and Piedmont (80,683

people or 9 per cent). These four regions, all located in the North of Italy, host 58 per cent of all migrant minors in Italy. In division by provinces the leaders are Milan (344,367) and Rome (321,887).

In the school year 2008/2009 630,000 foreign students were (Borrini and De Sanctis, 2017). The data quoted in Dossier Caritas (2009) shows that on 1<sup>st</sup> of January there were 140,423 Romanian citizens under the age of 15 residing in Italy, which amounts to almost 18 per cent of the total residents of this citizenship. And of the 53,696 citizenship acquisitions registered in 2008, 23 per cent were given to people under the age of 15 who were mainly of Moroccan and Albanian origin.

In January 2010 the number of minors was approximately 933,693 (22 per cent of the total number of the foreign population residing in Italy. At the same time only 800,806 non-EU citizens younger than 18 years had a regular residence in Italy. The new data processing modes made it possible to distinguish between the second generation (58 per cent of the minors with the regular residency) and minor immigrants (42 per cent). Almost half of the second group (49 per cent) arrived in Italy before they turned 6 years, hence this would be Rumbaut's (1997) generation 1.75 (Barban, Conti, Gabrielli, Gabrielli and Guarneri, 2011).

In 2012 and 2013 minors of foreign origins amounted to 23,9 per cent of the foreign population, which was 2,4 per cent more than in 2011. Up to 60 per cent (approximately 500,000) of them were born in Italy (ISTAT, 2012), and the rest came to Italy with their parents, after them or on their own.

During school year 2015/2016 there were approximately 615,000 foreign students residing in Italy - 653 persons more than in school year 2014/2015 (0,1 per cent) (Borrini and De Sanctis, 2017).

At the same time, according to the research, conducted by Borrini and De Sanctis (2017), in the last five school years, from 2011/2012 up to 2015/2016, the number of Italian students decreased by 193,000 persons from 8,205,000 to 8,012,000 (-2.3 per cent), while the number of foreign students increased up to 59,000 (+7.8 per cent) - 756,000 to 815,000 students.

For some years now, migrant students are the dynamic component of the Italian school system, which contributes with its growth in the times when the overall school population is diminishing due to the steady decrease in the number of Italian students.

The data, presented by Barban, Conti, Gabrielli, Gabrielli and Guarneri (2011), gives us a very complex overview of statistics on different communities. Communities with the long average presence in Italy - such as the Senegalese and Philippine – has a lower percentage of children in respect to their general populations (approximately 20 per cent). Other communities, such as Indian or Pakistani, whose presence in Italy is shorter, have a higher percentage of children in their total population (25 and 29 per cent respectively).

These differences also correspond with relative irregularities of gender composition. Also, the age of minor's entrance in Italy differs depending on community. In the case of Ukrainians and Moldavians, children are usually older than 6 at the time of their entry into Italy (compared to the general average age of 2.7 years). But there are also many separate cases when these patterns show irregularities. For example, Peruvian minors have a higher average age than Moldavians, but the South-American children in general come to Italy when they are younger than fours.

There is also a difference between the period between the arrival of the adult and of the minor, registered on his/her residence permit - it is more than 5 years for Chinese nationals and less than 2 years for Ukrainian and Moldavian citizens.

## **“Second generations” and the school as a form of first socialisation**

Italy is facing certain difficulties with its transformation from the country of emigrants to one of the main immigration destinations.

Political parties use the phenomenon of immigration as the base for their propaganda and as a “common enemy” – in their political discourse they promote the idea that the newly arrived foreigners will take the jobs away from Italians. However, the research, conducted by Banca d’Italia (2009), showed that the increase in immigration caused the employment growth by counteracting with the aging of the Italian population caused by decreasing birth rates (Banca d’Italia, 2009)

Hence, the children of first generation, who grew up or were partially socialized in Italy, and less inclined to accept a job that can be characterized by the famous “5 P” – “precario, pesante, poco pagato, penalizzante e pericoloso” (“precarious, physically difficult, underpaid, penalizing and dangerous”) (Dossier Caritas, 2009).

As we saw from the data, analysed in the previous segment, the number of students of foreign origins in Italian schools grows with every year. Their presence in Italian schools is a dynamic phenomenon that is the result of globalization, enlargement of the European Union, decentralization and requires a certain transformation of forms and means of communication, as well as a school reform.

School is the first important formal organization that children encounter on their own. It is the most important step in their social integration, especially when we speak about immigrant children.

The major part of research on Generation 1,5 conducted in the recent years in the EU and in Italy lies in the sphere of school system, pedagogy, adaptation and education in general. Their number increased lately, often drawing on analogous studies conducted in the US (Thomson and Crul, 2007). However, even though the theoretical framework is similar, second generation and generation 1.5 are ethnically and contextually very different compared to those in the US.

The studies of children of the first-generation immigrants in Europe often shows the importance of the host society and context for integration pathways (Crul and Vermeulen, 2003; Doornik, 1998; Barban and White, 2011). In addition, out of all social institutions in Italy many of the

immigrant children are visible and active only in school, hence it is very important to understand the conditions they are studying in and challenges they might have to deal with.

For the representatives of the Generation 1.5 arrival to Italy is a very important stage in the process of growing up – some of them are re-meeting their parents after years of living in different countries and have to reconstruct a relationship with them. At the same time, they have to start a new school, build new friendships and learn a new language: in other words, re-think themselves and fit into a new context, where they discover that now they are children of immigrants and foreigners (Ricucci, 2012).

Compared to other major European countries, Italy is characterized by lower educational attainment and lower intergenerational mobility (Brunello and Checchi, 2005). Considering all the data from the previous segments, I can conclude that studying educational choices, difficulties and limits of immigrant children is crucial to researching domestic violence in the context of Generation 1,5 and to formulating appropriate policies.

In the report “La via italiana per la scuola interculturale e l’integrazione degli alunni stranieri” (2007), Italian Ministry of Education states that it’s orientated towards the development of intercultural and inclusive school and describes ten lines of action that characterise the model of intercultural integration:

1. **Practices for reception and insertion into the school** that include cognitive, administrative, relational, pedagogical-didactic and organisational factors;
2. **Setting Italian as the second language** that has two phases: organisation and language learning;
3. **Appreciation of the plurilinguism** – individual and in school;
4. **Relationship with foreign families and orientation** that include the conscious choice of the school, the involvement of parents into the reception of students and their active participation in school activities.
5. **Relationships in school and in extracurricular time**
6. **Interventions on discrimination and prejudice** – racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and prejudices against Roma and Sinti.
7. **Intercultural perspectives for knowledge and skills**

## **8. Autonomy and networks between school institutions, civil society and territory**

### **9. The role and responsibilities of school leaders**

### **10. The role of teachers and non-teaching staff**

However, the real problem that emerges from many Italian scholars' research is that of school performance: the school achievements of foreigners are considerably worse than those of Italians. And this is not a universal process or an inevitable result of migration. For example, Dalla Zuanna (2011) makes a comparison with Australian immigrant children who on average are showing better school results than their Australian colleagues, and Swedish immigrant students whose marks are not worse than those of their Swedish peers.

So, what is causing such a poor performance by immigrant students in Italy?

The root of the problem is quite trivial: Italian school system is not designed for immigrant students, the way it is not designed for children from poor families and families with poorly educated parents. Instead it is designed for the children from more privileged classes that possess all the tools to help them reach their parents' social status as well. Immigrants, of course, do not possess these tools.

On the early stages, when families are deciding upon schools for their children, the Italian system tends to give more value to the parents' choice than to abilities and predispositions of students, leading to low school children mobility and diversity (Cecchi and Flabbi, 2007). Hence, immigrant children from families that might lack country-specific human capital and appropriate knowledge of the Italian educational system might be quite disadvantages (Barban and White, 2011).

The Italian school system is based on homework, but not only – it is implied that all students have to have someone who can help them with these tasks. The research, conducted amongst students showed that 4 out of 10 Italian students have this help at home. This number is higher in the families, where both of the parents received higher education - 7 out of 10 children in such homes receive help with their homework. On the contrast, only one immigrant student out of 10 stated that she or he has someone who helps her/him to do homework (Dalla Zuanna, 2011)

The school doesn't bridge the social gap neither between young immigrant children and their Italian peers, not between Italian school students from different social classes. As for foreigners, the difference in the age of arrival in Italy is very important.

Those, who were born in Italy, are as behind in their school performance, as their Italian colleagues from low-education families. And for those migrant students who arrived in Italy together with their families, the gap is even more obvious and dynamically growing depending on the age of arrival. In addition, young foreigners not only struggle with the competitive disadvantage as children of one of the most disadvantaged social groups in Italy, but also have to overcome further obstacles linked to their immigrant status (Barban, Dalla Zuanna, Farina and Strozza, 2008; Dalla Zuanna, 2011).

Hence, even younger foreigners who graduate from middle schools with good results tend to study only for a short period of time, as they are entering the labour market much earlier. This does not mean that Italian school system has to lower its performance standards, but, to quote Gianpiero Dalla Zuanna (2011), it's crucial to "emphasize that it's the necessary to give more school time to those students who need it, to those, who are more disadvantaged than the average student". Many immigrant students never get the chance to fully socialise through school and develop their skills and talents to their full potential, even though the Italian law states that school is open for all and education is compulsory and free of charge.

School as a precious instrument of socialization and inter-class and intercultural integration, are necessary to integrate young migrant people into society and give them more opportunities in life. The lack of this process can potentially lead to various human rights violations, criminal behaviours etc.

## **2.3 Italian Research on Generation 1.5 in the past decades**

### **ASSIRM's nation-wide research on migrant families**

With the growing foreign population in Italy and the percentage of immigrant youth, it is clear that there is a need for more profound and detailed research on the topic of Generation 1.5 – their stories, struggles, limitations and experiences with Italian system.

One of the first researches on so called “second generations” was developed in 2003 by ASSIRM (Associazione tra Istituti di Ricerche di mercato, Sondaggi di opinione e Ricerca Sociale). This research was discussed in detail in “Donne Immigrate e Seconde Generazioni” (Valencak, 2009) and in “Primi Appunti di G2 Marketing” (Napolitano, 2006).

It was conducted from August till October 2003 by Mario Abis, the counsellor of Assirm.

It consisted of 819 personal interviews based on a structured questionnaire that lasted 30 minutes each and was held in Italian (however, all the respondents were provided with the copies of the questionnaire translated in English and French for better understanding). The profile of respondents: immigrant people from outside of the EU (but not from the countries with the similar economic development rate, for example the USA, Canada, Switzerland), who hold a residence permit or made a request for one. The interviews took place in respondent's homes and work places, as well as parks, Internet points, international phone centres, supermarkets, cultural centres, places of public gatherings etc.

The researchers used the nation-wide sampling method (26 provinces) with quotas for the areas of residence, geographic area of origin (at least 30 per cent from Central European countries), religion (50per cent Muslim), gender (at least 20per cent women).

This research showed that any integration process, regardless of the countries of origin and arrival of an immigrant person, requires them to take two potentially contradictory positions, such as:

- the desire/need for assimilation both as a homogenizing attachment (to be similar to ...) to the behaviours and attitudes of the "host" society; and, more profoundly, as a sign of sharing and interjecting the same values and social constructs as said society to diminish, if not eliminate the



diversity that fuels the mistrust of 'local' and generates and justifies exclusion and marginalization of immigrants;

- the need to manifest their own ethnic pride to protect their integrity and identity and coherence of their cultural belonging, as an antidote to the alienation and feeling lost while confronting new values, different from their culture of origin.

The discomfort from the conflict between the search for assimilation and the struggle to keep the original identity was especially well discussed in the interviews with those subjects, whose culture is farther away from the Western European one. Often the freedoms existing in Italian society are in conflict with some of the rules, customs and values of the societies from which part of migrants come.

Some of the published results are:

- 71 per cent of the sample group agreed with the statement: "Italians think only about making money";
- 78 per cent of the respondents agreed with the statement: "Italian women are too free and independent";
- many of the respondents stated that they were shocked by the apparent disinterest of Italians in their elderly parents and the common tendency to "abandon" them (for example, hire immigrant staff to take care of them);
- many also claimed that they disapprove of the excessive freedom of sexual behaviour and the seemingly acceptable infidelity between spouses in Italy.

One of the factors that was mentioned by many respondents is female figure and female rights. According to the researchers, the conflict between local (Italian) cultural values and cultural background of many respondents was lying in the question of equality between men and women (moral, sexual, professional, legal) as it sometimes contradicts with certain social, moral, and religious standards accepted in other cultures.

Nonetheless, many of the interviewed women saw the process of integration into a new society as an opportunity for social emancipation, both to avoid marginalization and to self-assert themselves as an economic entity. This is particularly true for the communities where women feel

disadvantaged or are at risk of being punished as the result of their personal beliefs - for them integration into the new Western society can be a chance for a new life.

Therefore, this research showed that women seem more inclined to see the migratory experience as an opportunity (and not just as a sacrifice). As women are much more open to a new society and new values than men, many of the immigrant men fear of losing control of the situation and their role and importance in the woman's and family life in general. This is evident in the research data that shows that 53 per cent of immigrant men expressed a desire to return to their countries of origin, and only 34 per cent were not thinking about it.

Amongst the factors that make these men to stay in the new country they named:

- assumed resistance of women to go back and being forced to take up the same social role that they had before the move;
- explicit rejection of children born and/or raised in the new country (Generations 2, 1.75, 1.5, 1.25), who has a completely different vision of the host society, unknown to their parents;
- insecurities they feel about the economic, political and social systems of their countries of origin;
- parents' desire to give their children more opportunities through their full and definitive inclusion in Western society;
- fear that the return will be seen as the sign of failure and defeat; however, in cases, when a migrant family has succeeded in reaching a better quality of life in the new society, this success makes them even more linked to the new country.

In any case, return often and above all exposes women and young people to the painful realisation of how different from their own society/culture of origin they became: psychologically, in terms of values and behaviour. For them the process of reintegration into their home societies might become quite difficult and long.

This research, even though it had some questionable points regarding methodology and the sampling method, still gave a lot of useful information regarding the life of migrant population in Italy, as well as inside-family relationship, especially between the first generation and their children ("second generations").

## **Project AGORA**

Project Agora was financed by the Municipality of Milan with the funds from “Legge Nazionale 285/97 sull’Infanzia e Adolescenza” and took place from September 2002 till June 2004 and included 11 different actions orientated at all the foreign minors of school age.

One of these actions was a qualitative research that involved 20 boys and girls of foreign origins aged between 14 and 17 years, who came to Italy together with their parents or after them. The countries of origin of the children were Ecuador, Egypt, Philippines, Peru, China, Pakistan, El Salvador, Cuba.

The results of this research in great detail is described in “Ragazze e ragazzi nella migrazione. Adolescenti stranieri: identità, racconti, progetti”, curated by Graziella Favaro and Monica Napoli (2004). The book presents not only an overview, but also the transcript of each individual interview with drawings created by the respondent group.

The objectives of the research were:

- To give the voice to what some of the minor foreigners who arrived in Italy from other countries as the result of family reunifications have chosen to express;
- To analyse the points of discomfort and unease based not only on the socio-psychological theories regarding adults, but above all on how they are experienced by foreign children.

The initial hypothesis was the existence of a possible situation of disadvantage for the children, who migrated with their parents or after them, due to the necessary redefinition of the cultural, social, relational links and, consequently, of their identity.

Interviews took place in the places of study (school, afterschool), where children had the opportunity to find out about the research from their teachers and make a choice whether to take part in it or not.

The research itself was conducted in a form of a semi-structured “story of life” interview and a session of drawing.

As for the interviews, they were starting with the short part, when interviewers collected biographical (age, nationality, the year of arrival in Italy, current family situation) and scholastic

data (year of school, auto-assessment of school progress etc.). After that the researchers were asking a series of questions concerning the past, the present and the future. The past was referring to their lives in the countries of origin – memories, relationships, school, friends, nostalgia - and their arrival in Italy – travel, expectations, first impressions. The questions about the present were focused on their current life in Italy – school, relations, free time, difficulties and moods. In regards to the future the respondents were asked about their wishes, dreams about whom they are going to become, where they are going to live and how does it relate to the dreams and plans of their parents. After the end of each interview the participants were asked to draw their past, present and future. From the analysis of the interviews and the drawings we can see that, despite coming from different countries, many of the participants lived through the same difficulties:

- painful memories of separation from parents, when they were moving to Italy;
- separation from the rest of the social circle, the sentiment of nostalgia, the frequent use of phrases like “I miss”, “I was missing”.
- learning the new language (all of the respondents stated that they learn Italian in the first three months)
- the change of space – the need to adapt to live in a big city, to use metro and tram, etc.
- idealization of the new country before arriving there – some of the respondents stated that back in their countries before the move they were imagining Italy as a perfect country with no negative aspects to feel less sad about leaving their home and friends.
- new friends – many of the participants said that they have many Italian friends and have no problems with creating new social connections. However, when asked about specific number of friends, they themselves claimed that actually they have more social contacts with other foreigner students in their schools than with Italian ones.
- isolation – during the parts of interview about their free time and typical school week, many of the participants were telling about doing most of the activities alone, by themselves, including playing video games or going for walks. The same was shown also in the drawings.
- the same goes for the house chores – many respondents said that as their parents work all day, they do most of the home chores by themselves, as well as homework.

- difficulties with parents and relatives in general – especially with those, with whom they were living before coming to Italy (“grandma”, “auntie”).
- vision of the future – almost all of the participants had a very clear view of what they want to study in the future and what they want to do as their careers. The pictures of future were very bright and positive in every interview, mostly because of the difficult separations in the past and challenges of the present.
- desire to find a partner to share the future life with – especially evident in the responses of those, who witnesses his/her parents’ separation or the problems between them.
- the desire to not go back to their countries of origin – expressed by all of the respondents, on the contrary to the desires of some of their parents. Instead, the participants stated, that in the future they see themselves either in Italy or in another foreign country (for example, one of the Chinese participants drew her future self as a self-sufficient young woman living in Paris surrounded by many friends).

This research discovered the inner world of Generation 1.5 – their difficulties, sorrows, but also dreams, hopes and plans for future. Project Agora filled a significant knowledge gap in respect of young migrant minors and thank to semi-structured narrative interview gave valuable material to the future researches.

## **The first nation-wide research ITAGEN 2**

ITAGEN 2 was the first nation-wide research on migrant children who were born in Italy or moved there at a young age. The Wave I took place in 2005-2006, the Wave II – in 2008.

Rich in-depth results provided by this research are widely used and quoted by numerous prominent Italian scientists and researchers whose work is focused on integration of young migrants and migrant generations. Amongst them are Francesco Maria Chiodi e Mara Benadusi (2006), Nicola Barban, Gianpiero Dalla-Zuanna, Patrizia Farina and Salvatore Strozza (2008), Oliviero Casacchia, Luisa Natale, Anna Paterno and Laura Terzera (2008), Roberta Ricucci (2010; 2011; 2012; Eve and Ricucci, 2009), Nicola Barban and Michael J White (2011), Gabrielli and Paterno (2011) and many others.

The survey was oriented on school students who had at least one foreign-born parent (Generation 2.5), were living in Italy and attending middle school at the time of the research. The main focus of the research was social integration of students with foreign origins.

The schools were randomly chosen among those with 10 per cent of foreign student (in five of the Central and Northern regions: Lombardy, Veneto, Tuscany, Marches and Lazio) and 3 per cent of foreign students (in four of the Southern regions: Campania, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily).

Wave I worked with the sample of 6,368 foreign and 10,537 Italian respondents (Barban and Dalla Zuanna, 2010; Dalla Zuanna, Farina and Strozza, 2009) who lived in 44 provinces and attended 228 different middle schools. In every school the researchers interviewed three entire classes (one from each level of middle school). In schools with more than 60 foreign students, data was collected from more classes to improve the sample and balance out the ratio of natives to foreigners. In the mean, 64 Italians and 51 immigrants were interviewed in every school.

The Wave I survey was focused mainly on collecting the data on characteristics of respondents' families, the process of migration, the way children use their time and what are their plans for the future. However, during the Wave I the researchers were not collecting any information on respondent's scholastic achievements (Barban and White, 2011)

The next wave was the first follow-up and took place in 2008, two years after the first series of interviews. By that time almost two thirds of the initial sample group already finished middle

school. This time the questionnaire included a set of questions regarding students' scholastic achievement and the data was collected via CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviewing) interview among the subsample in five Italian regions: Veneto, Marches, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. The target population includes 1,389 migrant children and 1,589 Italians.

The response rate was 70 per cent among Italians and 47 per cent among foreigners, however, the great majority of the non-responses was attributed to technical problems (such as disrupted phone calls etc) rather than to refusals.

To collect the data on scholastic achievements of the respondents a series of additional interviews were performed in schools (only in Veneto and Apulia). The researchers also collected the data on the final middle school exam for 364 students.

The general data pile, that included the results from the Wave I, follow-up interviews and the supplementary survey, allowed the researchers to trace the educational career of students who attended the 7th or 8th grade during the 2005/2006 school year.

This research was particularly important not only because it was the first wide survey on "second generations", but also because apart from foreign students it included also more than 10,000 young Italians. The choice to interview also Italian children was made based on two reasons - to compare the two groups and to discover their "strengths" and the problematic aspects.

Some of the results provided by ITAGEN2 showed in regard of emotional dimension of relationships, children from foreign or mixed couples more often feel isolated, presumably because of language barriers (Barban, Conti, Gabrielli, Gabrielli, and Guarneri, 2011).

The analysis of the results of the second wave, published by Barban, Conti, Gabrielli, Gabrielli, and Guarneri (2011), showed that the children of foreigners (those with at least one parent born abroad) got worse school results, but with the difference between the children born in Italy (generations 2 and 2.5) or those who have moved there in pre-school age (generations 1.75 and 1.5). Among Italians, the number of students with good grades for exams is two times higher than among foreigners, even those who were born in Italy. Therefore, this research proved that the question of school performance of foreign students is not only a matter of language (as even second generation and generation 2.5) showed lower results. It is above all a practical problem - only 25 per cent of foreign children claimed to receive parental support with their homework, compared to 47 per cent of Italian children (over 70 per cent of both or their parents have a university degree).

But when the data is separated by the country of origin, it shows the negative educational patterns for children with parents from Yugoslavia, Morocco, Tunisia and Macedonia, but also indicates a positive coefficient for students originally from China. Further still, Chinese students seem to have higher levels of achievement than Italian ones. This result is consistent with studies conducted in other countries (Glick and White, 2004; Portes and Hao, 2004).

Among other, the data also showed that the scholastic achievement of children with less educated parents, who live in a rented house, and have more than 3 siblings, is significantly lower. Immigrants' children are also more likely to live in larger size families.

Additional difficulties in school can come from:

- the level of competence in the Italian language (as mentioned above – both of children and their parents);
- the number of hours dedicated to studies;
- the socio-economic characteristics of the family;
- social capital of a student and the characteristics of his/her friendships and relationships with peers (Ricucci, 2014)

Even though ITAGEN2 didn't provide much distinction between generations of migrant students (which is crucial in the studies of realities of foreign students in Italy, as every generation has its own challenges and difficulties) and didn't specifically focus on the family relations or life conditions, it was indispensable for Italian science.

The data, collected by ITAGEN2 researchers, discovered the reality of foreign students in Italy not only from the pedagogical point of view, but also in correlation with information on migrant condition, countries of origin, family situations and relationships with parents. This was a valuable basis for numerous scientific works, some of which were named above.



## Other notable works

Among other notable researches it is important to mention “Quando nasci è una roulette. Giovani figli di migranti si raccontano” by Ingy Mubiayi and Igiaba Scego (2007) and “Generazioni in movimento. Riflessioni sui figli dell’immigrazione: il caso di Torino” by Fredo Olivero and Roberta Ricucci (2008).

“Quando nasci è una roulette” was written by Ingy Mubiayi, who was born in Cairo and moved to Italy at the age of 5, and Igiaba Scego, who was born in Rome in the family that moved to Italy from Somali.

Their book contains a series of narrative interviews with young people of African origin between the age of 15 and 30, who was born or moved to Italy when they were very young and hence belong to generations 1.25, 1.5, 1.75 and 2.0. The interviews touch upon the majority of factors, discussed in the previously quoted researches - school, relationships inside the family and with peers, religion, racism, dreams for the future.

This work gives a very rich material for analysis as the interviews are conducted in a form of a semi-structured “story of life” interview and discovers the problems and risk factors that are important in a research on generation 1.5.

One of the respondents, a university student from Tunisia, who moved to Italy with her family following her father when she was 13 years old, for example, touches up upon her identity and family relations:

“Not every girl wears a hijab. And everyone has an Italian mentality. Those, who belong to the second generation. I still don’t consider myself a second generation, because I live here for only 7 years, even though I do live here and speak Italian perfectly. But my friend, who is here for 16 years and never went back... This is her country. As for me, I’m still in the middle. I feel like I’m in the middle”.

“As for my family, I don’t see any conflict of generations. Not in an extreme way, like some of my friends who tells me: “My father doesn’t let me do this and that”. No, thank God, my father is not like that. I’m a daughter of an imam: he is very religious, but he has an open mind. Because in the end my parents both live here and see how this society is. And that maybe there are some things

in our traditions or in our culture that we need to change to be able to live here. [...] Even though I cannot go out at night. But I understand why: Even if I would like to go out in the evening, my father will not let me. Because he is scare, you know, his daughter... but I have great relationships with my family. Maybe they are too busy... to control me!" (Mubiayi and Scego, 2007).

"Generazioni in movimento. Riflessioni sui figli dell'immigrazione: il caso di Torino" was written by Fredo Olivero and Roberta Ricucci (2008). This book examines the phenomenon of the exponential growth of the foreign population in Italy, especially in the context of "second generations".

The authors analyse the demographic and statistic data regarding the number of immigrants in Italy in general and in Turin particularly, geographical and cultural scenarios, special conditions of the life of young migrant, such as family relations, life conditions, school, work and others.

In general, all of the researches and published works, quoted above, provided valuable information about the Generation 1.5 in Italy, as well as other migrant generations. But it is clear that there is a need of a research on specific generations to fill the knowledge gap and improve the conditions of life of many migrant youngsters who live in Italy.

## Conclusions

Italy was the leader of European migration for almost 100 year. Recently, with the change in international politics, legislation and the level of economic development, it transitioned in a major immigration destination.

The dimensions of foreign populations increase with every year, and the amount of Generation 1,5 grows accordingly. At this point the young migrants became an important part of Italian society and its future as well – the number of foreign children born in Italy is increasing, while the number of Italian born babies decreases every year.

In the past decades Generation 1.5, as well as other “second generations”, attracted attention of many Italian researchers and scientists. A number of important surveys and researches were conducted, especially on the school and pedagogical level, as they are the first stage of socialisation for many young foreigners.

This data as indispensable as there is an obvious gap in school performance between students of foreign and Italian origins.

But it is clear that there is a need for a more profound research on the life conditions and challenges that Generation 1.5 deals with, including isolation, social exclusion, domestic violence and other human rights violations.

### CHAPTER 3. INTERVIEW FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the 10 interviews with 11 people with migrant background (one of the interviews was an interview with a married couple) and 6 interviews with 9 experts (the interview with the staff of Le Onde was a group one due to the schedule of the staff members) that revealed a number of important details and patterns, that are crucial to the success of this research.

The interviews with the first group are reported in a narrative form and are organised in a chronological order. As the interviews were semi-structured, the participants were taking the lead as they were telling me their life stories and describing significant life events. I, as an interviewer, was asking them leading questions in order to make sure that the interview stays on the topic. When there was a need for a clarification, the questions were asked immediately to ensure the full understanding between the me and the participant.

In order to protect the respondents' identity, the majority of the names were changed. Some of the pseudonyms were chosen by the participants of the study themselves, some were assigned by me for confidentiality purpose. The only exceptions were public figures and social initiatives leaders.

The interviews with the second group were also semi-structured and contained discussions of numerous cases from each expert's experience. Those relevant to the study were described in a narrative form, as well the participant's thoughts on domestic violence and migration.

All of the interviews were conducted in Italian, with the use of specific words and phrases in English for subjects' or mine convenience. This was done either because in Italian a word/phrase might be adopted from English (for example, stalking, middle class etc.) or because one of us needed a clarification of a term or concept. Later all of the interviews were transcribed and translated in English.

In the following descriptions of each particular case all of the evaluative judgements (of motives, feelings and actions) belong to the participants of the study and are transcribed in the words and phrases the respondents described them.

In the last part of the chapter the findings are analysed in connection to the three research questions.

### 3.1 Results of interviews with people with migrant background

#### Hiwet

*“For me my children are both my joy and my suffering”*

**Gender:** female

**Age at the time of the interview:** 43

**Origins/place of birth:** Asmara, Eritrea

**Migrated in: 2000 at the age of:** 26 (2000)

**Currently lives in:** Turin, Italy

**Marital status:** separated, has three children (at the moment of migration they were 5, 6 and 9 years old).

**Current employment status:** cultural mediator

**Date and location of the interview:** 27.03.2017, Turin, Italy (Casa del Quartiere)

Hiwet is a separated mom to three G1.5 children. She came to Italy with her husband and children when she was 26. Currently he lives in Turin and works as a cultural mediator.

She is half Ethiopian on her mom’s side and half Eritrean on her father’s. She states that because of this she doesn’t feel much difference between two countries and cultures and frequently visits events, organised by both communities.

She is an Orthodox Cristian and frequents an Egyptian Coptic church in Turin.

Hiwet is an active member of her communities, despite her slightly marginalised position as a separated woman with children.

We had a conversation about her experience of domestic violence that was witnessed by her children for 7 years, and her conflict with her youngest son.

She told me that there are more than 2000 Eritrean families in Turin, and even more Ethiopian ones.

In her opinion, for Eritrean families it is very difficult to migrate all together. She told me that in some cases a father can come first to find a job and after this ask for a family reunification. But mostly the first ones to come are mothers.

She sees a lot of discrimination in her community between those families who came to Italy many years ago, when the war has just started, and those, who are coming now.

Hiwet was born in Asmara, Eritrea. When she was 16, she was married off to a man who was 14 years older than her. He came from a mixed family, born to an Italian father and Eritrean mother, and had an Italian citizenship. During the interview she clearly stated that it wasn't her decision to get married at that age and to that man. It was her parents' decision, as he was half-Italian and had an Italian passport, so he could potentially take Hiwet with him to Italy. Hiwet says that after years of reflections she is not angry with her parents anymore: *"They probably wanted the best for me. But even though they didn't take any money, they still sold me. No one listened to me. I was a minor, so they signed all the documents for me"*.

She says that it was a difficult period for her, as she wanted to continue studying, but her parents were very excited to marry her off as they felt like they found her a perfect husband for her. *"I take care of my parents now. Even if I send them 100 euro, it's already a big help for them. And it's them who made me get married, when I didn't want to. I wanted to continue studying. After getting married I continued with the high school a bit, but when I had my first child, I had to become a housewife"*.

Hiwet and her husband started having problems straight ahead – he was extremely jealous and possessive. Hiwet wasn't allowed to go out on her own, drive, work, meet friends. She blames his *"Italian/African head"* and conflicting family models he experienced as a child due to his origins. Also, at that point he was already showing his violent side.

Even though the family always had plans to move to Italy eventually, the husband didn't support Hiwet's attempts to learn Italian and didn't help her, even though he himself spoke Italian perfectly. *"He wasn't interested in teaching me Italian or in me studying it on my own. He was saying that I can just ask him to translate"*.

By the time when Hiwet was 21, she had three children. Her oldest son, who was born when she was 18, has the autistic spectrum disorder and is not autonomous. Hiwet's daughter was born when she was 20, and her youngest son - one year later.

The father wasn't present in the lives of their children. Hiwet remembers that even when they were still living in Asmara, he was either at work or at home watching TV. He never took interest in children's lives and activities, so they knew very little about their father. And the last three years before migration he was spending half of his time in Italy.

As Hiwet's husband had dual citizenship, the whole family had Italian passports too. In December 2000, during the Eritrean-Ethiopian war, they moved to Turin, Italy. At that time Hiwet's husband was already living between Italy, where his parents resided, and in Eritrea for 3 years, since 1997. Hiwet says that it was her choice to move – not only because of the war. *“I said – either you stay here, or take us there. I chose to come here because it made no sense for me to raise children all by myself. If he was my husband, we had to do it together. In some sense I'm happy that I decided to come here, because this way my children got to know their father for 7 years”.*

At the time of the move Hiwet and her husband were 26 and 40 years old (respectively). Their children were 9, 6 and 5 years old (hence at the time of the interview they already were 25, 23 and 22 respectively).

She remembers her first few months in Italy as *“dark and cold”*. Everything was very new – she didn't speak Italian at all, didn't know anything about the culture, and couldn't communicate with other people, didn't know *“what snow was and why people need heaters”*. The climate in Turin was very different to what she was used to: *“It was winter, everything was dark”*. Her husband, who came before, rented a small apartment and it also became a source of great anxiety for her and her children: *“We had to live in an apartment on the third floor without an elevator. I grew up and lived all of my life in a private house in Eritrea, so it was very difficult to accept that apartment. My children felt the same”*.

At first her children couldn't understand why they came to Italy. *“They were asking me: “But why did we come here? Why didn't you choose another country?”*. But overall, Hiwet's children adapted to their new life easier than her. Back in Eritrea her older son was studying at an Italian primary school and younger kids were going to an Italian nursery school, so they already spoke Italian quite well. She says that they only had a few problems in the beginning. For example, her daughter didn't want to eat with Italian kids, because *“for her it was very weird that they are screaming all the time”*. But now, as Hiwet says with a smile, *“she became too Italian”*.

Hiwet was learning Italian from watching MTV while her husband was at work and her children were at school. She was missing having her family around – even though she has two cousins in Italy, one has a family of his own and another one lives very far away. So, this new sense of isolation, developed from the absence of any family connections and not being able to create a new social network due to her poor language skills, made her severely depressed and anxious. Relationships with her husband got even worse – in Italy he became even more jealous and possessive, and was getting even more physically violent with her.

In 2007 she decided to separate from her husband. She says that for her parents *“separation from your husband means shame”* and that her mom still expects them to get back together even though 10 years have passed.

Hiwet says that they really didn't get along. *“He was constantly controlling and discriminating me, not letting me go out, not letting me learn Italian. This was a sort of a moral violence. And my children felt it too – this discrimination of me as of a woman. But he was violent also physically. If I was speaking about something and he wasn't agreeing, he would begin to insult me or hit me”*. He was also playing slots and spending most of his earnings gambling.

When she told him she was leaving him, he started insulting and beating her in front of their older son. She said that amongst other insults he was calling her a prostitute (*“he was thinking that I'm leaving him because I found someone else”*), a drug addict and an alcoholic (*“which is not true!”*). Hiwet connects her son's problems with the trauma from this incident, because *“he still remembers it”*. She says that when he was insulting her, she *“responded to him”*. This was when he attacked her – grabbed her neck, threw her on the floor, put his knee on her throat and started slapping her. She couldn't breathe at that point, but he cut his hand on her big earrings, started bleeding and got distracted. At this moment she managed to free herself and escape. When she arrived in the hospital, she asked the lady at the reception to call the police and reported her husband. *“I made a complaint, because I wanted it to be the last time. At one point you just say: “Enough”*.

However, she says that, even though he was always violent and attacked her many times, it wasn't because he was “evil”. *“I can only call him stupid. There are people who are bad, evil, use lies against you... He is not like that. If he doesn't like something you say, he either beats you, or doesn't speak to you”*. So, she explains his violence against her with the fact that this was the only family pattern he knew.



She said that throughout the years she constantly asked for help from both of their families, both when they were still living in Eritrea and after they moved to Italy. Her mother-in-law, who also lives in Italy, didn't believe her and, instead, accused her of having a lover on the side and blamed her for all of her son's actions. Hiwet's own parents told her: *"Women have to be strong"*. She says she wasn't surprised, as her mother never disagreed with her father, who was cheating on her for years. *"He wasn't violent, but he made children with four different women. And he's not even Muslim... But my mom took it all"*.

As for children, Hiwet says that her husband never beat them, but they knew he was abusing her constantly. Also, according to her, he was starting fights with her in front of them and later trying to *"buy their love"* by buying them toys and asking them to lie to her when she will ask where they got them. *"They realised it all later. They were asking me why he is doing this, why he is asking them to lie to me. They were so confused about his behaviour. He was not acting like a father"*.

After the separation her husband moved in with his mother. Hiwet says that he's been having many health issues in the past years. He is still not present in their children's lives. Hiwet says that both he and his mother were speaking badly about her to the Eritrean community in Turin, *"because for them a woman who wants a divorce either has a lover or is a prostitute"*.

Hiwet lives with her older children. She says that she feels amazing on her own, without her husband, but still she misses having a man beside her to share life with. It gets lonely, as she has no family around to support her or give her an advice. She says that if her and her husband stayed in Eritrea, they would've managed to resolve their problems with family and friends' help. *"But here you have "celebration friends" – only for parties and holidays. Everyone is applauding you is you separate from your husband or get a divorce. But then no one speaks to you"*.

At the same time, she says she never even considered getting married again. However, she tried to date and had a partner from Ethiopia for 4 years. She was hiding this relationship from her children because she was afraid, they will get jealous and *"blame her"*. She remembers these times with conflicting feelings. *"He wasn't bothering me, we were going out together, going to the cinema... It was nice to be with someone. I was happy with him. I was weak, because I just wanted to be with someone"*. On the other hand, she felt like he was ashamed of her – a woman with three children who didn't have much time to dedicate to him and in the eyes of the community wasn't a marriage

material anymore. *“You know, he didn’t have any children, but wanted them, wanted to get married... But no. For men from my country it’s a no. For them being with a woman with kids means shame. Not even a marriage, just being together already means shame”*. She says that he was hiding their relationship and avoiding her at any community celebrations. She broke it off eventually, because felt like she was suffering again.

When we started speaking about the issue she had with her children, Hiwet closed off a little and referred to them as *“my joy and my suffering”*.

She said that coming to Italy with them and raising them on her own was the most difficult thing she ever did. *“And while I was raising them, they caused me a lot of suffering. Thank God, now they are calming down”*.

However, from the following conversation it became clear that she refers mostly to her younger son. Her older son is autistic and, according to Hiwet, cannot be self-sufficient. Her daughter, the middle child, in Hiwet’s words, always acted like *a vice-mom*” for the rest of her children. She went through a time of not accepting her new Italian life, then adapted and started going out with her classmates frequently. But Hiwet stressed that even though they don’t understand each other perfectly now due to the fact that her daughter became *“a real Italian”*, *“she never rebelled against me. As she is a girl, she is closer to me, more of a friend to me”*.

And the youngest of her children started *“rebellling”* when he was 16 years old. Hiwet remembers that time as *“full of anxiety and suffering”* and says that that situation brought back her depression. She says that he was constantly going out with his Italian friends, started drinking and was often coming back home drunk. *“He was just out of order – he was insulting me, raising his voice, he was so rude. And I still loved him as a mother”*. She was worried that she is losing all her control over him – she wanted to know where he was going, with whom, what was he using. *“What kind of places can you frequent at night? It’s true, there are many entertaining things around, but there are also things that are very risky”*.

She was very scared by the possibility of her son becoming addicted to drugs. He admitted to her that he was smoking marihuana at least once, but Hiwet suspects that it was more than a few times and he didn’t want to tell her the whole truth. She says that drugs are a big worry for foreign parents in Italy – according to her it’s a taboo in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

For a long time Hiwet didn't know what to do and how to address the situation. Her son wasn't listening to her and at one point even stopped responding. *"If I was giving him a punishment, he was screaming: "What are you doing?! It's my life!" But he was still a minor. Okay, the life is yours, but the responsibility is mine. I am your mom"*.

He started having problems in school. Hiwet says that he was a good student, always got good marks in Italian and scientific subjects even when he wasn't studying much. But he's got in a lot of trouble because he was frequently skipping school. She was receiving daily calls from the teachers and the principal because her son was either absent or late (in these cases he was entering the class through the window). Because of his problems with discipline and frequent absences he had to repeat a year and after this lost his interest in school completely.

Hiwet says that she tried everything - spoke with him in a calm way, screamed, involved her cousins and even his father, which was very difficult for her. But it didn't help.

She admitted that in the end she kicked him out of their home. She says that it was a very difficult decision for her. *"As a mom, I was suffering a lot, was telling to myself: "But what am I doing?", but... If no one does anything, it will not help him..."*

However, she didn't want to go in depth on this part of her past and closed off. This led me to believe that it happened when he was still a minor. The only thing she told me about that incident was that after she kicked him out, *"he grew up and calmed down"*.

At the time of the interview, he already turned 22, was living autonomously and working as a waiter in a restaurant in Turin. Hiwet told me that they have a good relationship now and that he is in a long-term relationship with a half-Italian, half-Senegalese girl. *"She doesn't feel African, not even one bit. And her Senegalese father is also not present in her life, so she also has the same concept of freedom"*.

Hiwet sees the personal concept of freedom as the main reason for everything that happened with her son. She says that growing up in Italy, her son got a sense of freedom that is very different from hers and very similar to those of Italian teenagers. *"Their freedom means – to go out, to do anything you want. And I'm not against freedom. This freedom – I let them have it. In the sense that I was married because of my parents will. So, I understand very well what freedom is and it was my choice to give it to them"*. She says that because of her past, when she never had freedom to do what she wanted, she desired to be a *"mom/friend"* to her children. Also, as she had children

when she was very young, she *“wasn’t much more adult than them”*, but still played three parts – of a mom, a friend and a father – for many years. And because of this, she assumes, she didn’t have much authority in her younger son’s eyes.

She also sees her being a woman as one of the reasons. She feels like a man, especially a father would’ve had more influence and more resources to discipline him. *“I was desperate – yes, it’s true, I’m a woman, I cannot be or do what a man can”*. She says that *“as a breadwinner”* of the family she did everything she could for her children to have all they needed. *“From material point of view, they were not lacking anything. I always worked, never refused a job”*. But what they were lacking, in her opinion, was the father figure, a figure of authority. *“But the absence of a father figure... Being a woman, I wasn’t going to turn into a man. So, because of all his freedom and because I was alone, he made me suffer even more. He crushed me”*. Hiwet repeated this statement a few times. She says that she really felt crushed by her son’s behaviour and called it the third discrimination she suffered - *“discrimination by children”*. First two she defined as *“discrimination by parents”*, when she was forced to get married at such a young age, and *“discrimination by husband”*, as throughout their time of living together she felt like she was trapped in a *“mini-prison”*. However, in the situation with her son Hiwet feels like in the end she *“had won”*, as her son now *“calmed down”* and lives a structured autonomous life.

Amongst other reasons for what happened, Hiwet named their migrant condition. She says that she has seen many G1.5 youngsters starting to *“act out”* because they feel different and cannot make sense out of it. *“We are immigrants here. Our generation grew up with the knowledge that one day we will come here. We know how to make sense of it. But they, on the other hand, don’t know whether they are from here, or from there. So, they are running away from this identity crisis, from these problems, from being different. And outside they are doing everything that they want. They want to have money, to live like Italian teenager”*.

When we spoke about whether Eritrean women report domestic violence that they are suffering, Hiwet told me that it doesn’t happen a lot. She says that she knows many women who were abused by their husbands, but they never speak about it because they are *“proud women”*. She confessed that she also was too proud and too scared to tell anyone what she was living through. *“Only later I understood that it’s easier if you speak to someone”*.

In the end of our interview I asked Hiwet about the perception of violence in the community. She told me that if I will ask an Eritrean woman what is violence, she will not understand me. She said that women are taught to be *“just women – stay quiet, have children, take care of their husbands”*. According to her, no one speaks about violence in the families, it is all very normalised and is seen as a part of a normal family life.

On the other hand, she said that she had never heard about a femicide as a phenomenon before she came to Italy. In Eritrea she only heard about one case when a husband killed his wife. *“That one was crazy”*. She thinks that the reason is that the culture and laws are different between Eritrea and Italy. *“Here in Italy, it is very easy to kill a woman. I hear about it every day and I’m so scared. This never happens in Eritrea, I never heard about a man who would kill his wife there. And here they kill women like sheep”*.

## **Faven**

*The main problem was my father's incapability of being a father*

**Gender:** female

**Age at the time of the interview:** 43

**Origins/place of birth:** Asmara, Eritrea

**Migrated in:** 1984 **at the age of:** 11

**Currently lives in:** Palermo, Italy

**Marital status:** single

**Current employment status:** cultural mediator, psychologist

**Date and location of the interview:** 30.04.2017, Palermo, Italy (Moltivolti)

Faven was born in Eritrea in 1973 in an Orthodox family and arrived in Italy in 1984, on a family reunification visa. Here she graduated from the Università degli studi di Palermo with a degree in psychology and currently works in the field of migration.

Faven's family had Ethiopian citizenship and roots, but were living in Asmara, Eritrea. Her father was 9 years older than her mother, so at the time of their arranged marriage she was 14 and he was 21. Their mothers were very close friends for many years, and Faven's mother was promised to her father even before she was born.

Faven says that, even though she always thought that her father became physically violent only after her family reunited in Italy, she later discovered that he was beating her mother since the beginning of their marriage, when they were still living in Eritrea.

When Faven was very young, her father became a member of a political party that was against the Ethiopian government. This led to his eventual arrest for a period of time. When he was released, he decided to leave the country and move to Italy. At that time Faven was 2 years old and her brother was a new-born. They stayed in Asmara with their mother and grandparents.

After a few years Faven's mother also decided to migrate. Faven says that, on one part, her mother believed that their family needed to finally reunite and thought that moving to Italy in order to be with her husband will make this process faster for the whole family. On the other hand, her mother

was very young at that point – she gave birth to Faven when she was 15, and to her brother at the age of 17. *“It was the madness of youth. We didn’t have any economical or other type of problems in Eritrea. But she was young, many of her girlfriends were preparing to move to Europe... So, I always saw it as a stage in an emancipation of a young woman, her first independent adventure”*.

Faven and her brother stayed in Asmara with their grandparents, and their mother followed the same migration route that their father took a few years before – went to Sudan, acquired a fake passport, got on a plane to Italy.

At those times the major part of the Eritrean migration was female. In one type of cases, women who were working in Italian families in Eritrea, were later moving with them to Italy. Or in the second case, they were women like Faven’s mother - moving to Sudan, making fake documents there and later taking a plane to arrive in Italy and search for a job. *“Sudan was a place of transit. It was a happy place at that time – people could work there, be together for the last time, organize their affairs, documents. And then leave”*.

From Sudan her mother arrived in Syracuse, Italy, where she reunited with Faven’s father. They stayed in Syracuse for about two years and later decided to move to Milan. However, on their way there, they stopped at their friend’s house in Catania. He managed to change their mind about moving to the North of Italy. *“He said that if they have intentions to bring their children, it is not a good idea to move to Milan - it’s a big city, it’s dispersive, but somewhere around Catania they had more chances of building a good life for our family”*.

According to Faven, at that time, with the smaller migrant community in Sicily, the work market was very different and her parents both managed to find jobs in a town outside of Catania. There they lived for a few years, until the new amnesty for undocumented migrants came out – then they were able to get their documents in order. In 1984, after making a family reunification visa for her children, Faven’s mom came back to Eritrea for two months in order to organize their move to Italy.

Neither Faven, nor her brother had no real memory of her. Faven remembers that she was having “flashes” of her (as she was 4-5 years old when their mother left). So, they mostly knew her from pictures. Faven remembers that during those two months she was very intrigued by her mother and just wanted to observe her. *“When she was speaking to my grandma or doing something around the house, I was hiding somewhere and just observing her, trying to get used to her voice”*.

At the time of migration Faven was 11 years old and her brother was 9. She says that moving wasn't an unexpected event for her, because she grew up with the idea that one day their family will move to Italy. Hence, she had a fantasy of Italy for as long as she can remember – due to the fact that her parents already lived there, Eritrea's colonial past and the Italian community residing in Asmara. *“One of my aunts was married to an Italian man and I was visiting her every Sunday in the Italian neighbourhood. It was so friendly and pretty, full of small villas covered in flowers! And those Italians were probably somewhere from Veneto – all white like milk, blond, with blue eyes... So, this was how I imagined Italy”*. Later, when she arrived in Catania, she was very surprised to see a very different image of Italy.

Faven's father worked as a live-in cook in a rich local family and arranged an apartment inside their house where all of his family could live. Her mom was working as a maid in another family. They were the first foreign couple that ever lived in that town, as there were not many immigrants in Italy at that time and most of them were choosing to stay in bigger cities. Faven remembers that the whole community was involved in the life of their family – everyone felt for them as they were very young foreigners with two children who needed to adapt to their new lives.

Faven and her brother arrived in March, so it was not possible for them to start school straight ahead. Instead for the rest of the academic year they were tutored by the daughter of their father's employer, who was 16 years old.

When they finally started going to an Italian school, all the teachers recognized the difficulties they might have been having and helped them get integrated into the school system smoothly. Her favourite teacher evaluated her knowledge and created a special schedule for her to get to the same level as the rest of the class. Hence, she learned Italian very fast and cannot remember ever having problem with it. *“I started speaking so fast – in a few months I was already able to understand almost everything. We were the only foreign family, so I was always in an Italian speaking environment. Even my family at first was trying to speak at home both Tigrinya and Italian”*.

However, even though the family integrated into the town's community quite easily, became a part of social life and was going to the same church as locals, for Faven it was a time of self-discovery. She says that the social context and the new community made her think a lot about what other people think, what prejudice they have, how they see her and her family.



It was the first time she discovered the colour of her skin as well. *“For the first time I started hearing phrases like: “Black people are thieves! Black people stink!”. So, I started smelling myself every five minutes to check if my skin really smelled bad”*. She also became very protective of her school things and of her backpack - if some of the children was complaining to the teacher about a stolen pen or pencil, some of her classmates would immediately look at her.

But the biggest challenge was living with her parents again. As neither Faven, nor her brother remembered them as parents and had absolutely no memory of their father, it felt like living with strangers. They both struggled a lot with their authority. Faven says that it was impossible for her to even call them “mom” and “dad”, because for 7 years the role of her parents was played by her grandparents. So, she was just calling them by their given names.

This was, to some point, also encouraged by her mother, as she gave birth to them so young and at that stage saw her children also as friends or younger siblings. She was feeling guilty for abandoning them back in Eritrea and not being in their lives for so many years. But with their arrival she started feeling more at peace with herself.

Her father, instead, after not knowing his children for 9 years and then re-meeting them already at the age of 11 and 9 years, was struggling with his role as a father. Faven describes him as a rigid and inflexible person, who was seeing himself as a patriarch of the family and demanded obedience. At the same time to Faven and her brother he was a stranger and they were refusing to recognise his authority.

In the retrospect, Faven sees the main reasons for all the problems not as much in his cultural upbringing, but in his personal qualities, namely his incapacity of being a father, reinforced by his personal need for domination. Hence, his main parenting technics were control, strict rules and physical violence. *“He was saying that I was becoming too Italian. As I was growing up, I wasn’t even allowed to go out for a pizza with friends or to dance – I had to be at home at 9 every night”*.

The history of domestic violence in the family started long before the arrival of Faven and her brother in Italy, but after they also became victims. The tension in the family was growing. The relationships between the father and the children were getting worse, the mother was supporting them more often and he was getting frustrated. Faven says that he was the one who always loved to win, but couldn’t win in his family, even by being physically violent.

However, despite this in the following years Faven's parents had two more children. Their relationships with the youngest kids were very different to those with Faven and her brother, as they finally had an opportunity to play their parental roles this time.

But, as the violence in the family continued and escalated, after suffering from it for 25 years of marriage, Faven's mother eventually asked for a divorce. Faven says that her mom was the one who was holding the family together and leading it forward, as she was always working a lot and was an emancipated woman. After giving birth to four children, buying a house, paying the mortgage and suffering from violence for many years, she, in Faven's words, opened her eyes and realised that she is completely economically self-sufficient and has no ties to her husband.

Faven says that her mother lived through a difficult time in her relationships with both her Italian and Eritrean communities. *"In this small town every Italian woman was giving her advices: "You have to think about your children! They need to have a father!" She was accused of many things she had never done – of having a lover, etc"*.

At the same time, she also received lots of judgment from the side of the Eritrean community and was betrayed by many of her female friends. Most of them, having been living through the same domestic abuse for years, according to Faven, were both admiring her for courage and hating her for doing what they were not able to do (due to not being autonomous from their husbands etc).

The father hasn't accepted the separation and didn't agree to a divorce. But Faven says that this time her mother took a very strong stand for herself and didn't give up. So even without an official divorce she made up her mind definitively and ended their marriage.

Hence, a few years after the divorce were very hard on her emotionally. At the time of the interview she was residing in the next town in the house that the family bought in mortgage. After a few years on her own she had met, in Faven's words, "the man of her live" – an Eritrean Muslim man, with whom she is very happy.

Faven says, that her mother after the divorce never wanted to marry again or even cohabitate with another man on a regular basis. *"She says that she will be dating until her death. But when I look at them, I know that real love exists. He is everything she was always looking for in a man – responsible, educated, open-minded, loves to travel. Now my mom is always out, doing things she always wanted, but could never do with my father"*.

At the time of the interview Faven's brother was 41 years old and was living in working in Catania. He decided against giving me an interview.

As we were speaking about the influence of migration on the level of domestic violence in Faven's family, she told me that she is sure – after the move it became worse.

She thinks that many men who feel superior to women, after moving to another country and losing their social status have the need to compensate it with something. And this “*something*” usually is aggression and violence. She feels like her father was not feeling “*enough of a man*” after he moved to Italy and lost his social status, power and authority. He was also feeling jealous of her mother, as he felt like she was more intelligent and adaptable than him. So, he was just looking for any excuse to get angry and violent in order to reinstate his masculinity.

Hence, in Faven's opinion, even though the history of violence started before their move to Italy because of her father's personal issues and qualities, the level and intensity of it enhanced after the migration due to his new migrant condition, loss of power and reputation, frustration and the specific migration pattern of the family.

As for domestic violence in Eritrea, Faven says that it is not common to speak about it with anyone. “*If a man will attack a woman on the street in Eritrea, a woman can go to the police, report him, and he will go to jail. If the same thing is done by a woman's husband, it is seen as his right*”.

The same continues when families move to Italy. According to Faven, in the worst cases they can ask their relatives and most respectable people in the community to help them, speak to the husband, try and improve the situation etc. “*No one is reporting domestic violence to the police. I never reported my father. My mother also never reported him – she didn't want to create any legal problems for him*”. For the same reason her mother also never even went to the ER to get medical help after the abuse.

The big part is also played by the church. According to Faven, every Eritrean Orthodox family usually had its own priest who can also help and be a mediator in situations of domestic violence. Lately, in her opinion, there are more priests who can take woman's side in a situation like this. Their number is still not that big, but it is a positive dynamic for the community.

As for the perception of violence, Faven says that she noticed a weird dynamic – Eritrean women more likely will report to the police domestic and intimate partner violence if their partner is a foreigner, than if he is a fellow Eritrean.

She believes that in general migration influences the level of domestic violence, when a perpetrator already has a predisposition for violence.

## Adonay

*“It wasn’t easy for any of us”*

**Gender:** male

**Age at the time of the interview:** 44

**Origins/place of birth:** born in Ethiopia in an Eritrean family

**Migrated in:** 1980 **at the age of:** 7

**Currently lives in:** Palermo, Italy

**Marital status:** married

**Current employment status:** cultural mediator

**Date and location of the interview:** 03.04.2018, Palermo, Italy (Notarbartolo)

Adonay was born in Ethiopia in 1973. Both of his parents were Eritrean, but moved there for work. Both of their children – Adonay and his sister, who is younger than him by 1 year and 1 month – were born there.

With the beginning of the revolution, when a big part of Eritrean workers decided to move back to their country and others chose to migrate to other countries, his father selected the second option. In 1975 he moved to Sudan and then proceeded to Italy, where he settled down in Rome.

At the same time the rest of the family moved to Eritrea to stay with Adonay’s grandmother. In 1978 his mother also moved to Italy and took Adonay’s younger sister with her. She had intentions to take both of her children with her, but at that time Adonay already got used to living with his relatives. He remembers hiding in the closet not to be forced to leave, and says that eventually his uncle convinced his mother to take only his sister with her and leave Adonay in his and the grandmother’s care.

Hence, Adonay eventually stayed in Eritrea for three more years and built a new family connection with his uncle and grandmother. *“They were my mother, my father, my everything for at least three full years”*.

He remembers that he was suffering from his uncle's "*involuntary psychological terrorism*", as he calls it. As his uncle, who, according to Adonay, loved him as his own son, knew that one day they will have to separate, he was trying to prepare him for this moment. "*He was constantly showing me photos of this unfamiliar couple who, according to him, were my parents and who were supposed to eventually take me to live in Canada. I had no idea who they were and what is Canada. I was so confused...*".

He moved to Italy in 1980, at the age of 7 years on a family reunification visa. He feels like that was one of his bigger "*abandonments*", as he had to leave his second family (meaning his uncle and grandmother) with whom he got very close due to his age and the time he spent with them. At the same time, he had to also prepare himself to meet his "new" family, because he had very little memory of his parents and his sister.

When we were speaking of the number of "*abandonments*" that Adonay had lived through due to his story of migration, he told me that he personally reflected a lot about it. "*I can name you 30 different separations and abandonments that I lived through the first 7 years of my life – because of living between Eritrea and Ethiopia, because of my family's migration...Every time it was different. For example, my separation from my mom was very different to my separation from my sister, even though they left together*".

He travelled to Italy with an older person who accompanied him till Rome, where he reunited with his family. He didn't remember much about that day, but with the help of one of his cousins in Eritrea he managed to reconstruct the order of events. "*Apparently, they never told me where I was going. My uncle took me out, we went to the airport and he left me there with an unknown man who was supposed to take to Italy*". He assumes that they never told him where he was going, why and with whom, because they were afraid that he will refuse to go, like he refused to leave Eritrea with his mother years before.

Adonay told me that reconstructing what had happened in those days became a personal task for him. In the past years he also interviewed many of his relatives to find out all the details of his migration process.

Adonay admits that he couldn't feel any sentiments when he re-met his family in Rome. For him they were strangers from the photos, not more. He also remembers feeling weird because he knew that from now on, he will have to live with these strangers. One of his most vivid memories of that

day is how he chose to sit apart from them in the bus that was taking them from the airport to the centre of Rome.

Due to all of his personal struggling, Adonay became very closed off and the only person who he was fully accepting was his little sister. *“She was the only one I trusted. And I didn’t trust the other ones... I mean my parents. It was my protective barrier”*.

At the time when Adonay came to Italy, his family was not doing very well economically. Both of his parents were working in rich Roman families, were living in their employers’ houses and couldn’t fully take care of their two children.

Hence, upon his arrival, Adonay was straight ahead placed in a “collegio” – a sort of a boarding school managed by the church – where his sister was already living for two years, since the age of three. It happened in a matter of days. Adonay remembers it as a very difficult time both for them and their mother, who really wanted to keep them at home, but couldn’t afford it.

They were seeing their parents only during the weekends. *“We were calling it “a boarding school for poor people”. We were staying there because our parents had to work day and night, living in other people’s homes, in order to start making even a minimal wage”*.

This was where Adonay started his studies in Italy. He went to a school where the predominant part of students were Italians from underprivileged families. *“We had the same problems as poor Italians, but then a series of our own problems in addition. And they, of course, had a series of problems that we didn’t have”*.

He remembers that with so much instability in his life, he was trying to create relationships with more stable figures, especially nuns who were managing the school. But his attempts weren’t very successful.

However, he was a very good student – learned Italian very fast and doesn’t remember having any problems with any of the subjects. He loved to read and his teachers recognised and supported his passion. *“My motto was – less socialisation and more reading”*.

Adonay says that he was very lucky in two ways – he was good at studying and these abilities were recognised. He says that in numerous other stories of his friends from Eritrea that was not the case – many of them had difficulties with Italian, with education in general, with the reception they got in schools. *“Many of my friends were straight ahead claimed “he is not good, because he is a*

*foreigner*”. *It’s impossible to move away from this label*”. Out of 10 Eritrean colleagues that he had in school, only he and two others actually graduated from high school.

In 1981, due to their economic difficulties, Adonay’s parents were planning to migrate again. Their initial idea was to move to Canada, but eventually they changed their plans and instead decided to settle down in Milan, where they saw more opportunities to find better jobs and *“finally reunite all the family under one roof”*.

However, it didn’t happen straight ahead. Adonay says, that it took around 5 years for their family to start living together – from 1981 when his parents moved to Milan till 1986 when he and his sister moved in with them. Meanwhile they were living in boarding schools, changing them a few times to be closer to Milan and eventually staying for three years in a school in Bergamo. At that time, they were seeing their parents for two days a week at best.

He remembers that at the time when they were living in Bergamo, their mother wanted them to study in an elementary school next to their “collegio” that she liked. However, her request was denied, as the parents of their potential classmates were against it – they thought that their foreign background will lower the progress of the whole class. At that time, Adonay says, their Italian was already at the same level as of their Italian peers. But nonetheless, their mother continued to insist and they got accepted. Adonay said that the three years that he studied there were very nice and he made many friends there. It was sad for him to eventually leave this school to move to Milan in order be closer to his parents.

However, he remembers that he didn’t suffer much racism in school - it was a safe space for him apart from a few comments he received in the high school. But outside of the school it was different – due to the political climate in Milan, in Adonay’s opinion. He says that he was constantly receiving racist comments on the streets and while using public transportation.

In 1985-1986 his parents moved in with their relatives and Adonay and his sister moved in with them too. Only later, in 1990 the family finally moved in into its own place. It was the first time when they actually had to start living together as a family, and it was a new difficult experience – both for Adonay and his sister and for their parents. *“I was kind of happy, because I was very tired of boarding schools. But it wasn’t easy for any of us”*.

Adonay’s father was struggling with the loss of his status and a family role. In Eritrea he was a man of a certain authority, who was respected and listened to and it all was given to him



automatically, as he was a man. After the move he lost it all and had to learn to live with the discrimination, limited job options and much less respect from the society. His patriarchal role in the family was also not as absolute anymore – he had to get used to the fact that for migrant women it is easier to keep contact with the society, find jobs... He says that for many Eritrean men of his father's generation it wasn't easy to accept the role of women in this society. *"It takes them years to make their peace with it. Many marriages end because of this and many men turn to alcohol"*.

However, Adonay told me that his father managed to adapt. In his opinion, it happened because he had a less difficult past than his mother and *"was less angry"*. Yes, he wanted to set the authoritarian rules and be the patriarch of the family, but Adonay's mother wasn't accepting it anymore – mostly because she was earning more. The children were also not accepting these. But in the end, after many problems, Adonay's parents decided to stay together.

Adonay admits that it took him many years and a lot of work to finally accept his parents as parents again. He says that he probably managed to fully do it only as a grown-up. It was very difficult psychologically both for him and for his parents, especially his mother. It was very challenging for her to accept the fact that he *"had other parents before them"*.

He says that they had many problems on many levels. *"I was a difficult child. I was resisting them and not letting them in, as over the years I built very strong barriers... I knew that they couldn't guaranty any sort of stability for me even after I moved to Italy to be with them"*.

Adonay didn't trust his parents, didn't want to confide in them or do what they wanted him to do, and in general didn't want to accept them as parents. They, having a lot of stress in their lives, were trying to punish him for his disobedience. *"Not physically, I was never touched by anyone in my life... Never received even one slap. But I wasn't an easy child and they had quite difficult, strong personalities... It wasn't easy"*.

He says that his parents, not having any idea about pedagogy, any experience of actually being parents or any good parenting patterns from their respective families, were struggling a lot. Their children were not acknowledging them as parents, and at the same time were speaking better Italian and were much more integrated. At some point, in Adonay's opinion, they started feeling like they completely lost their authority, because even when they needed to translate a simple document, they had no choice but to ask Adonay or his sister for help.

Children, on the contrary, were rebelling more and more, as they were feeling intellectually superior to their parents and were not giving them “*enough respect*”. Adonay says that his family at those times never had “*normal father-son relationships*” and that “*there were many things present that should never happen in any family relationships*”. However, he never gave me any details or examples. He just told me that he feels like for 30 years of his life he lived “*in the shadow*” of separation, reunions, battles for authority etc.

On the other hand, now Adonay recognises his luck – he says that the fact that he had both parents and that they stayed together through all of the challenges is a very rare thing in his community. Despite all the problems that they might have had, he still felt their support regarding the school and education.

He says that to change his relationships with his parents he had to decide and take responsibility for all of his family relationships, because he felt like his parents will not do it. He did a lot of self-discovery and self-work, spoke with his relatives, and now feels like it helped him to be more at peace with his family.

As for G1.5, Adonay says that for many of his friends with the same background, the difficulties of family migration (separations, abandonment, estrangement) became determinative in life and turned their life paths “*in a negative direction*”. Amongst other factors, that he sees as determinative difficulties, he named also moving to another country in general, being a child in Milan at the times of Lega Nord and Lega Lombarda, discrimination at schools.

Adonay says that that for many of his friends with the same migration story these factors became a push in the direction “*of drugs, alcohol and premature death*”. He sees a direct connection between their age of migration, migration route, relationships with parents and “*decisions to use drugs, self-medicate to escape from reality that many of us made*”. Many of Adonay’s friends never came back from these detours and either suffer from psychological problems or spend years fighting their drug addictions. Many of them also died before their time.

He sees the main reason for this in their common migration background and calls it a “*perfect negative storm*” – starting from the war in Eritrea, where many families lost relatives, to Italy, where their parents had to survive on very little money and undergo multiple discrimination, to abuse and discrimination inside boarding schools.

Many of Adonay's friends at some point abandoned schools in Italy and went to England, in many cases with the blessing of their parents who saw no future for their children in Italy. *"If you speak to Eritrean families, there is never an imagined future for the children. There is only an imagined past - the one you can blame for all your failures in the present"*. He says that even the brightest of them, who under the normal conditions could've pursue even a PhD, were never supported or motivated by their parents to study further and finished their education at the level of secondary school.

Hence, nowadays their opportunities to find a job are very limited. Most of them are doing temporary, manual, low-paid jobs and, as a result, get depressed. According to Adonay, self-actualisation is not recognized amongst his G1.5 peers at all. *"Everyone was always just fighting to survive and never thought about anything apart from survival"*.

One of the other reasons for this, in Adonay's opinion, is parents' inadaptability and low level of education. He says that many families are trying to re-create a family system of their country of origin also in Italy, without realizing that it is impossible. *"They spend years before they understand it and meanwhile, they destroy their children. I mean - seriously damage them. Most of the things that went bad in the lives of my generation, went bad because of this"*.

Regarding multiple identities, Adonay says that to some extent G1.5 is luckier than G2.0 and G3.0. In his opinion, even though Italy doesn't fully recognize him and his peers as Italians, they always have their second identity to fall on to. One of the most important issues for him is their language skills – he says that most of his peers speak perfect Tigrinya and feel connected to their country of origin. *"Yes, it's difficult to have two identities, they are always in conflict. But for G2.0 it's even worse – Italy doesn't accept them at all. Till their death people are going to ask them where they came from. And did you see what happened with the Jus Soli discussions?"*

Adonay says that he refers to himself as an Italian with foreign origins, but for his nephew who was born and raised in Italy it's not the case: *"How can he say that he has foreign origins? He is Italian and that's it. An Italian with black skin"*. He says that he personally feels foreigner both in Eritrea and in Italy, but he is also a citizen of both countries. At the same time his nephew is a complete foreigner in Eritrea and in Italy he is also not considered an Italian. *"How they say – black Italians don't exist?"*

He feels like a big role in changing the situation can be played by public policies on integration, especially of different generations, and by laws. On the other hand, he told me that he is very disappointed with what is happening in Italy on the political level – “*with the Jus Soli, with NGOs who are not allowed to save people at the sea, with everything... I live in a fascist country now. Now we, foreigners, have even less opportunity to speak up*”. He says that he doesn’t have much hope that anything is going to change in Italy in the near future.

## **Amalie**

*“My mom told me: “So I brought you to Italy and saved you from the war just for him to beat you here?”*

**Gender:** female

**Age at the time of the interview:** 26

**Origins/place of birth:** Sri Lanka

**Migrated in:** 1999 **at the age of:** 8

**Currently lives in:** Palermo, Italy

**Marital status:** separated, lives in a protective housing with two daughters (7 and 8 years old at the time of the interview)

**Current employment status:** unemployed

**Date and location of the interview:** 14.07.2017, Palermo, Italy (Casa Mediterranea delle Donne)

Amalie was born in Sri Lanka in a Christian family. When she was 8 years old, she came to Italy with her mother and her sister, who is 3 years younger than her. At the time of the interview she was living in a protected house for the DV survivors, together with her daughters. I got in contact with her with the help of Le Onde Onlus – a Palermo-based association that works with the phenomenon of violence against women and children.

Amalie was born in 1991. Her father was already living in Palermo for many years, even before starting a family. His marriage to Amalie’s mother was an arranged one and he came back to Sri Lanka only to get married.

Amalie’s mother got pregnant with her immediately after the wedding, and the father went back to Italy to work. He came to visit them in two and a half years and after that visit her mother got pregnant again, with Amalie’s younger sister.

Their reason for migration was the war. Amalie says that her family lost everything in the move, including their house. But she doesn't have much memories of that time, as she admits. *"Everything I remember is what my mother told me"*.

The same goes for the memories of her father, as she didn't remember him at all. *"When he came to pick us up from the airport, I wasn't sure whether he was my father. I thought he just came to accompany us"*.

She remembers that it took her *"months and months"* to finally believe that this man was her father and to start calling him "dad". It wasn't easy for her to even accept the fact that now they all had to live together. *"I didn't trust him at all. I was growing up with my mother, my sister and my aunt, there were no men in our house"*.

What helped was the fact that her mother got pregnant again and gave birth to her brother in Italy. After this Amalie finally started calling him "father". Her sister, on the contrary, accepted him as a father since the beginning. *"For her it was okay; she was only 5 years old"*.

She remembers getting vaccinations to start going to school, because her father told her that without this *"they"* will take her away from the family. She says she was very angry at him, because she has a fear of needles and felt like she was forced to live through this by a stranger.

After this Amalie was accepted to an elementary school in Palermo and studied till the last year of high school, without, however, taking the final exams.

She says, that if it wasn't for her father, she would've left school much earlier. She had many difficulties with studying, starting from the language. *"It was so difficult for me to start again at the age of 9. I just learned how to write in my language, and now I had to start it all over again with another one!"*

She was also older than her classmates, as she had to start at the elementary school at the age of 9. She didn't have any friends at school, as she describes herself as a closed person that doesn't trust people easily. *"My sister was trying to make me interact with the others more, but I didn't care, because I didn't trust them"*.

In general, she remembers her adaptation to this new life being very difficult and painful. She was scared of everything, even of helicopters and planes flying over the city and every time wanted to run to her mom for comfort. She didn't like the Italian food she was given in school and was

bringing a packed lunch from home. She says that once she even had a very bad fever, as a psychosomatic reaction to not wanting to go to school.

Amalie recognises all the help that she got from her teachers though. She says that all of them were very nice to her and were trying to help, to integrate her into the life of the school more. *“They were not the problem, I was. I didn’t want it”*.

She says that she also never had a very warm and close relationships with neither of her parents. She attributes it both to their culture of origin (especially in the case of her mother), and to their personal qualities (in the case of her father).

At the time of the interview she described her current relationships with her father as *“so-so, as always”*. She says that she just never had a very warm relationship with him, like her sister and brother had. Even when she wanted to know how he is doing, she was asking her mother, as she and her father barely spoke to each other in general. *“He is not a bad man; he was my angel. And he is a great grandfather to my daughters. Just that with me he wasn’t like this”*.

She says that she always had to be very carefully with what she says in front of her parents – not to speak to them too informally, to always reply very politely, otherwise she could’ve been slapped immediately. In her opinion, they were way too controlling – she was not allowed to go out, to have friends, to wear anything apart from traditional Sri Lankan clothes, use any type of makeup etc. Swimming suits were also forbidden. It was very difficult and frustrating for her – she was a very young girl who grew up in Italy, and seeing her Italian peers doing all of the things she was not allowed to do was hard.

Amalie says that, as her parents got an arranged marriage, they don’t accept other types of marriages. According to her knowledge and experience, if a Sri Lankan couple has an arranged marriage, it is a work of the whole family. It eventually becomes not only a union of two people, but of their whole families. And on the contrary, if a Sri Lankan woman marries a man who she chose herself, and they start having problems, her family will not help her at all, as they are not a part of this union. *“Also, after the wedding you are supposed to move into your mother-in-law’s house and live as one family, so it is all very complicated”*.

In the last years of high school Amalie’s parents started arranging a marriage for her. They wanted her to marry one of her cousins, and all of the family was offering their sons as a groom. But

Amalie says that she never would've been able to accept it. *"I'm not this type, I wanted to make my own choices"*.

When Amalie was 18-19 years old, she met a Sri Lankan man, who later became the father of her daughters. As she was a Christian and he was a Hindu, her parents refused to accept this relationship. Also, he was 10 years older than her and wasn't chosen by her parents, which was also a big issue for them. Hence, Amalie had to act against their will in this case. She says that for her, however, religion wasn't as important as how they felt for each other. So, she left her parents' house and moved in with her partner.

Her parents weren't speaking with her for three years after that. Even when they were seeing each other on the street or at the Sri Lankan community celebration they were completely ignoring her existence.

Amalie feels like that situation was a *"double violence"* for her – not only they were not communicating, but it all was happening while they were living in the same city, very close to each other. She acknowledges her guilt and says that she was probably wrong on many accounts (*"I wasn't listening to them"*), but feels also like didn't deserve such a harsh treatment from her parents.

She admits that during these years she was missing her mother a lot, especially when she was pregnant and later, when her children were born. *"My oldest daughter is just a copy of my mother. The doctor told me that probably while I was pregnant, I was thinking about her a lot"*.

Living with a partner was quite liberating for her, as she remembers. She could have friends and have more freedom to meet other people, go out and wear whatever she wanted. Her partner was buying her the clothes that she wanted, even the things that were more form-fitting or short. *"For the first time in my life I could use red lipstick and eyeliner"*.

During the 6,5 years that Amalie was living with her partner, he was drinking heavily and constantly inviting strangers to their home. With the birth of their second daughter, he started becoming physically violent with Amalie. She admitted that she knew about his drinking before she moved in with him. *"I knew he was an alcoholic, but I didn't know that he was drinking every day! It would've been okay if he was getting drunk on weekends, with his friends... I'm not against anything! But you need to know your limits!"*



She feels like he was venting his anger for everything that was not going well in his life (arguments with friends etc.) on her. It was continuing also while she was recovering from Caesarean sections and breastfeeding. Amalie generally avoided describing the details of the beatings she was receiving. However, at one point she said: *“I was breastfeeding my daughters, and my back was broken here...”*, at the same time indicating her ribs. She didn’t go into any details and changed the topic fast. Later she also told me that he *“was using a lighter on her”*, but again, didn’t go into any details.

When Amalie’s older daughter grew up a little, she started understanding what was going on a little – waking up to the noise, asking about strange people in their home. Hence, Amalie got worried about the climate in which her daughters were growing up.

She told me that, despite being very violent with her, her partner had never hurt their daughters. Amalie says that, despite everything that had happened to her, to them he was a perfect father. However, she also told me that her daughter *“saw some things”* when she was waking up to the noise. The girl started commenting on her father’s state, using phrases like: *“Daddy has red eyes again today”*. Amalie says that in those cases didn’t explain anything to her daughter due to her own personality. *“Whenever something is happening to me, I keep it to myself. But I was scared for them”*.

She said that the main reasons for other type of conflicts between them were money problems, as her partner has a habit of offering drinks to others, and the fact that he was inviting his friends to their home for drinking parties. He was also quite jealous, and Amalie really resented this as she felt like she needed her space. He was asking for explanation even if he was calling her and the line was engaged, and she had to explain to him who was she speaking to and about what.

During our conversation, Amalie stated again and again that she had the problem not with the drinking and the parties in general, but with them happening so often. *“I was telling him that it is okay to drink from time to time, some champagne to celebrate an occasion or something. But not every day! And I was telling him to meet his friends outside of our house, not to bring them home, because I didn’t want to see them”*.

She used the same words to describe her unwillingness to know any details about his work as well: *“I also didn’t want to hear anything about his work, when he was coming home. He was saying that it’s because I don’t work. But no, this is not the reason. Just that the things from outside should*

*be left outside and not brought home. What is happening home should stay at home, what happens at work, should stay at work”.*

Her parents also knew that their daughter’s family life was not going well. *“My mom told me: “So I brought you to Italy and saved you from the war just for him to beat you here?”*

Amalie says that things went wrong between them because he didn’t have his priorities in order and that his house, wife and children were not on the first place for him. She sees the alcohol and his migrant background as the main reasons for such a violent behaviour. *“As he is Hindu, back in Sri Lanka he wouldn’t be allowed to drink. But here he is on his own, so he is doing whatever he wants”.*

Amalie says that after the birth of her second daughter, she started communicating with her parents a little bit. It was very difficult to mend their relationships again and took a long time, especially considering that they were still not happy with her partner.

However, when I asked her if she ever wanted to report him to the police, she said that never thought about it and never wanted to punish him in any way. She also was blaming herself for the situation. *“I sometimes wonder how come I didn’t manage to explain to him that he shouldn’t drink, shouldn’t bring his friends in the house where his daughters are sleeping. Why I didn’t try hard enough?”*

Later, however, she told me that she arrived in the protected housing after speaking to a police officer, when she was in fact considering reporting her partner. *“I went there because I was scared for my girls. If tomorrow I will not be able to stand up from the bed, who will take care of them?”*

The police officer helped her to get in contact with Le Onde and leave her partner, taking her children with her. Hence, as it is stated above, I was speaking with her when she was already staying in Le Onde’s protected house for more than 1.5 years.

She said that she felt very good there. Her daughters were asking her why they are not at home, but overall, they are feeling happy there too. Amalie noticed also that when speaking to other people, her older daughter started telling them: *“Our dad is good, but for now he has red eyes, so we are living here”.* She also told Amalie that if his eyes are red, she will not see him, and will agree to a meeting only when he will have his normal eyes.

Since Amalie left her partner and moved into a safe house, she lost all of her Sri Lankan friends. She told me that she actually started making friends only when she left her parents' house and went to live with her partner, as she was not allowed to go out or have friends before. However, according to her, she and her friends "*lost touch*" because she decided to leave him, hence did something unconventional and unaccepted in the community. Amalie told me that in their community if a woman leaves a man for any reason, everyone will blame her and suspect her of having a lover on the side. Hence, she is seen as an adulterer now.

In the retrospect, she feels like she didn't get to experience neither childhood ("*it was the time of war, and my father was not there*") nor adolescence ("*I had to always stay home, study, go to church, and then I got pregnant...*").

At the time of the interview she was already living in a protected house for one and a half years, together with her daughters. She was studying to take the final exams to receive her high school diploma and told me that she never actually got to be herself before, so her plan was to be on her own for a bit after this.

However, she told me that she wants to also to go back to her partner. "*I want to start again... I want to try. We will see how it will go*".

According to her, in one of their last conversations, she gave him time to get himself in order and start acting like an older and more responsible person in their relationship. She says that she is not justifying any of his actions, but still hopes that he will change his behaviour. She felt sad that at that point he hasn't seen his daughters for 1.5 years and was hoping that this will be the reason for him to stop drinking.

Amalie's parents are living together in Palermo, raising their younger son. Amalie told me that they have a very happy family, even though their marriage was an arranged one. According to her, they never had any situations of domestic violence in their family and her father was always treating her mother with respect.

Amalie told me that her plan upon leaving the protected house is to stay with her parents for a bit. However, she wasn't feeling too confident about it, as she didn't have a job at the time and this would've put her in a dependent position. She was also feeling a lot of pressure from them, because they were disapproving of her actions, namely going to police and asking for help. "*But deep down*

*it's not even about this. In their opinion, I disgraced our community. And till this day they didn't understand why I've done what I've done".*

She feels like the situation wouldn't become so difficult if her parents were more flexible, more open to other life choices and less controlling.

In her opinion, she had suffered as much as she did also because her parents turned their backs on her. Her partner knew that she had no place to go and felt much freer in his abuse. Also, she had no one to talk to about what was happening and ask for advice. *"If there was someone older and more powerful than us, someone who could've protected me, it wouldn't have come to this".*

She also told me that she was considering leaving her partner many times, but felt like she had nowhere to go, because it was very possible that her parents wouldn't have let her in. She was also scared that they would blame her for everything that have happened to her – as she didn't listen to them, didn't marry the man they wanted her to marry and decided to choose a partner on her own. *"I knew that it will be even worse if I will come back to their home".*

However, at the time of the interview she told me that the things have changed since she went to the police and entered into a safe house, hence now she feels much better about returning back to her parents' house.

Reflecting upon her adolescence, she told me that if she had someone who would've listened to what she wanted and took it seriously at that time, her life would've been completely different.

On the other hand, she feels that if the same thing happened in Sri Lanka, she wouldn't have had a chance to leave an abusive relationship. Especially in a situation like hers, when she chose a man from a different religious group without her parents' consent. *"No, there it's even worse! So many things that you need to consider in Sri Lanka - religion, origins, class, skin colour... If you are a Christian, you can only marry a Christian. If you are Hindu, you have to marry a Hindu".*

Regarding the Sri Lankan G1.5 in Italy and in Palermo, Amalie told me that the community is very numerous and tight-knit. It puts a lot of pressure for every member and if someone is making a mistake, they are being judged and end up as pariahs.

She admitted that she knows about many cases of domestic violence in her community and amongst her friends. *"My friend lives here with her husband and her sister lives in Sri Lanka. She was sending her some money sometimes, but her husband didn't like it. He didn't want her to even*

*she speak to her relatives. She was working, but had to give all of her money to him. When she refused, he broke her hand... ”.*

Amalie told me that in her opinion domestic violence is very normalized in her country of origin. However, she feels like in Italy the G1.5 and G2.0 are more protected and have a chance of escaping from abusive relationships.

Many of her fellow Sri Lankans are suffering from pressure to be religious, wear only traditional clothes, to be friends only with Sri Lankans. Amalie says that, as far as she knows, back in Sri Lanka things have changed a lot and now the youth there has much more freedom. She sees the problem in the fact that the generation of her parents didn't have an opportunity to change together with the Sri Lankan society back home, but also didn't integrate into an Italian society. *“They kept the same mentality with which they came to Italy 15-20 years ago”.*

When I asked Amalie about what is considered violence amongst her peers of the same origins, she told me that it's not been taken into consideration as people by both their parents and their intimate partners – not being listened to, not having a right to do what they feel is right for them. She feels like this was more painful for her than physical violence.

In Amalie's opinion the fact of migration shouldn't influence the level of violence in any way and, if anything, should only make the situation better. She feels like on the contrary, migration should open people's eyes and give them new perspective on things.

However, in her experience, her migrant condition made her life more difficult, as, having lost touch with her family, she didn't have anyone to turn too when she was experiencing domestic violence. On the other hand, in Sri Lanka it wouldn't be possible for her to leave her partner and move into a safe house. Hence, she feels like it can influence the situation in both ways.

## Dilana

*“Till this day my mom says that she doesn’t remember strangling me”*

**Gender:** female

**Age at the time of the interview:** 24

**Origins/place of birth:** Jeffna, Sri Lanka

**Migrated in:** 1999 **at the age of:** 5

**Currently lives in:** Palermo, Italy

**Marital status:** single

**Current employment status:** student

**Date and location of the interview:** 03.04.2018, Palermo, Italy (her parents’ apartment)

Dilana was born in Sri Lanka in 1994 and came to Italy in October of 1999 together with her mother and her brother.

Her father was already living in Sciacca, and, with the escalation of the war in Sri Lanka, the rest of the family came to Sicily to reunite with him. From Sciacca the family moved to Palermo. In Dilana’s own words, she met her father in Sicily, as she had never seen him before – he was living in Palermo and didn’t come to visit them in Sri Lanka when she was old enough to remember him.

Her brother, who was 7 years older than Dilana, later went to live in London. Dilana stayed with her parents in Palermo, where they had many relatives.

Dilana describes her family as very traditional and closed off, and says that they chose to live in a *“very isolated”* from Italian society way. From the first moments of the interview she stated that she doesn’t support it and doesn’t think that it’s right. She says that she feels much more Italian than Sri Lankan after the years she had spent in Palermo. She speaks both Italian and Tamil and told me that she feels completely bilingual at this point.

However, neither her parents nor her other relatives in Palermo speak Italian at all after 15-20 years that they have spent in Italy. During the interview, which Dilana insisted on recording in her home, as she wasn’t feeling well, her mother was entering the kitchen where we were speaking from time to time to make tea or take something from the fridge. When I wanted to stop the

interview, Dilana, who was describing to me all the types of domestic violence she had suffered at home, told me that I shouldn't be worried: *"She will not understand even one word. She doesn't speak Italian at all. She might be able to understand some words separately, but never a full phrase"*.

Hence, when Dilana started attending an Italian elementary school in Palermo, she had many difficulties with it, as at home no one could help her with the language or homework. *"I feel like I was moving from class to class only because my teachers were feeling sorry for me"*. Her parents were also making her go to the Tamil school in Palermo city centre every afternoon after attending the Italian one. Dilana told me that she still hates that place and feels like teachers there are *"not even human"*.

In the middle school it got even more difficult for her, as she was severely bullied due to her foreign origins and difficulties with Italian. She explains it with the fact that most of her classmates were from underprivileged neighbourhoods and families. At the same time, she was getting help from most of the teachers, but it wasn't enough. Overall, she told me that her school experience in Palermo *"wasn't super horrible, but also wasn't a pleasant one"*.

Dilana was abused by her parents since she was 7 till the age of 14 years old, when she had to report her parents to the police and leave her home to move to a protected housing for minors.

She sees the main reason for their abuse in her physical appearance. *"I was born bigger than other children and I was always tall and had some extra weight. And my parents base everything on the physical appearance. It's a very typical thing – they think that if you are skinny, you will have everything. Later they started having more problems with me, but my weight was always the main one"*.

Dilana described a few situations of violence she suffered.

She remembers that once, when their family were eating, she asked for one more bread roll. Her parents refused to give it to her. She asked again. At that time her father got very angry at her and started screaming that if she is always hungry, he will make sure that this time she will be full. He forced her eat at least 12 bread rolls, until Dilana got sick and vomited. She was 7 years old at that moment.

At one point, as Dilana remembers, her parents started locking the fridge and the pantry, so if she was coming back from school and they were not at home, she couldn't eat anything until someone will return. *"At that point I became a thief – I was stealing food and spare change from others to buy something to eat. As my parents were also very passive, I had to steal money to buy presents for teachers, like everyone else did."* As the result, Dilana's relationships with food started to become very unhealthy, as she was trying to eat as much as she could when she had a chance.

The other situation she remembers happened a few years later. Her mother found her in their pantry eating leftover pasta, and got so angry that she slapped her on the face 4 times, threw her on her knees and put chili powder in her eyes. *"My mom is not like this anymore; she changed a lot. But at that time, she used to have these moments of anger, when could've killed me, I saw it in her eyes..."*

Another episode she remembers happened when she was 8 years old. One of their relatives who came to visit, found a sheet of paper in Dilana's room. *"You know how at that age you already start liking someone? I wrote the name of one boy I liked and drew a heart around it. And they saw this piece of paper"*. Her mother got so angry, she grabbed a rope, tied Dilana's hands together and burned them over the oven fire, so that she would not do anything like this again. *"She probably got so angry because she saw it as something only Italian children do – we are not allowed to think about boys"*.

Dilana's teachers saw the burn marks the next day and started questioning her. *"I was too ashamed to say that I liked a boy, because I also thought that it was not right. I truly believed it was all my fault. So, I told them that my mom burned my hand because I was secretly eating biscuits. For some reason I thought that this was the explanation that they will accept. I didn't even think that what was happening to me at home wasn't normal. I thought that I deserved of all this violence because I was bad"*. Having heard this, Dilana's teachers wanted to call the police and involve social services. However, out of 5 teachers one refused to do this and told the rest of them not to get involved. Dilana told me that the reason for this was her migrant background - the teacher saw what was happening to her as *"cultural differences"* and preferred not to interfere. Hence, Dilana suffered from domestic violence for 6 more years after that.

The other episode happened when Dilana was around 10 years old. One of her teachers asked her why she didn't finish her homework and she told him that she had to go to both the Italian and



Tamil school, hence sometimes she had no time to do two types of homework. The teacher asked her male classmate to help her out sometimes after classes. When Dilana's mother found out about this, she threw her on the floor, sit on top of her and started strangling her with a thick belt. Dilana says that at that moment she felt like her mother was really capable of killing her. She managed to insert her fingers between the belt and her own neck, and, in her opinion, this was the only reason why she didn't suffocate to death that day.

At the same time, from the age of 6 till the age of 12, Dilana was also sexually abused numerous times.

First episodes of abuse came from a group of illegal immigrants from Sri Lanka, whom her parents were letting sleep in their apartment. They were working in restaurants at night and coming back around 3 a.m. Dilana's parents were putting them to sleep in her room. *"On numerous occasion I was waking up in wet pyjamas and was thinking that I urinated during my sleep. Later I understood that that sticky substance was not urine, it was different... But I was a child, of course I didn't understand anything"*.

The other abuser was one of the family friends, who was working as a cook in a restaurant and was bringing them leftovers sometimes. *"He knew that I was always home alone after school, so he was coming at this time. I was trying to stop it, to pretend that I wasn't home and not open the door. But then he was just calling my parents and telling them that I wasn't home, so they were beating me for this. I couldn't tell them that he was touching me, they would've never believed me"*.

Till 2008 Dilana's problematic relationships with food turned into an eating disorder. *"I was eating a lot, all the time, because I was desperate, and then, of course, I was throwing up. I didn't know how to stop this, and my classmates also started noticing what I was doing. They didn't know how to help me"*. They were pushing her to speak with one of the teachers, and when she refused, put the teacher's attention towards Dilana's bulimia.

The teacher spoke to her trying to understand the origins of the problem and told Dilana that she wants to speak to her parents too. *"I was so scared – I really didn't want to have even more problems with my mother. I was trying to do everything I could for my parents to not come to school"*.

At the same time, she remembers that, because of her parents' humiliation, her weight and her eating disorder, she started hating herself *"on a whole new level"*. This was the time when she first started cutting herself.

Her parents found out about her eating disorder from another Tamil girl who was Dilana's classmate. *"My father said that if I have a problem, I need to be closed at home until I resolve it. I got scared that if he will close me at home, I will be abused all day long and will not leave our apartment at all!"*

This pushed Dilana to speak up. She spoke to the teacher who wanted to help her with her eating disorder and told her about everything that was going on in her home. At the same time her teachers found out from the mother of Dilana's classmate from elementary school about the incident with the burnt hands, and decided to involve the police. *"They asked me if I wanted to be taken from the school or from my home. I didn't want them to pick me up from our apartment, so I packed a backpack full of books, went to school the next day and the police took me from there"*.

Dilana was taken into a protective housing for minors in Partinico (a town 30 km away from Palermo), where she was the only foreigner. She remembers that for the first few months she was scared to walk anywhere by herself, as she was scared that her parents will find her. She also had to agree to study tourism instead of languages, because she was too scared of going to Alcamo, where the language school was, by herself.

In the centre she started working with a psychologist, and was in therapy for 5 years. She was trying to resolve her problems with self-harming and eating disorders. Dilana says that, due to all the stress, her bulimia was interspersed with the episodes of anorexia. *"One days I was eating a lot and then vomiting, other days I couldn't eat anything at all"*. This led her to gaining even more weight and to feeling even more resentment towards her own body. She was continuing cutting herself and was working with the psychologist on finding the roots of this self-destructive behaviours. *"I was hating my body. I thought that everything that had happened to me – from beatings to sexual abuse -, happened because I was so big"*.

Dilana attended high school there and describes it as a much better experience, because, even though teacher were much stricter, she was also more motivated. She started seeing school as a step to a better future and started putting more effort into her education.

In general, she says that she felt very calm and safe there, even though she was still struggling with the aftermath of all the trauma. *“It was a... you know, stimulating time. We were taking turns going out to buy groceries, cooking, cleaning. I had a sort of a wakeup call and had taken the responsibility for my life, because no one would tell me what to do anymore, I had to figure it out all on my own”*. She told me that in therapy she started thinking more about how her parents’ control over her life didn’t let her learn to be active and responsible for herself.

She stayed in the centre until she was accepted to the University of Palermo and was able to move into a student dormitory there. During these years she wasn’t in contact with her parents and didn’t want to hear anything about them. However, after she moved back to Palermo, they got in contact a few times. *“It seemed like they have changed a bit, but I wasn’t sure if I want to have all this in my life again”*.

At that time, when they were speaking about what had happened, her mother insisted that she didn’t remember any of these episodes of violence ever happening. Dilana says that this might be true. *“You know, sometimes a person’s brain just choses to forget all of the bad stuff. So, till this day my mom says that she doesn’t remember strangling me. I don’t know... She might not remember or she might be lying...”*.

Dilana says that her father is sure – the idea of reporting them to the police was *“put in her head in school”*. He still doesn’t think that they as parents had done anything wrong. In his opinion, it was a conspiracy against them and an invention of another culture, based only on the fact that they were foreigners.

At the time of the interview Dilana was living back in her parents’ home for about 6 months. She told me that she chose to come back *“for convenience”*, as in order to apply for an Italian citizenship she needed to either have her own income or to show a proof of her family’s income. *“I needed to finally get an Italian citizenship to be able to plan my future, and this was the easiest way. Even though I wasn’t sure whether I’m ready for all this stress again”*.

She told me that her relationships with her parents have improved a bit. *“They don’t mind me anymore. They don’t tell me what to do. Sometimes I go for days without even speaking with my father and we both are okay with this. They went from total control to total indifference towards what I’m doing”*. Now, even as she is living in their house, they are not interested at all in where she is spending her time and with whom, when she will come back home and where she spent the

night, if she doesn't come back. They even stopped thinking about arranging a marriage for her after Dilana said that she will never accept it. Overall, she says that they started listening to her opinions more and realised that they cannot forbid anything to her.

She is very well aware of the fact that the rest of her relatives in Palermo are blaming her for reporting her parents. *"My aunts, our family members – they all say that my parents' financial and legal troubles are my fault. This is the topic of every Sunday lunch. They even told me that I have to give my parents all of my scholarship in order to make up for it. But I have no intentions of blaming myself for what they did"*. At the time of the interview her parents were still in legal proceedings over the reported cases of domestic violence.

She was studying at the university and planning to move to Northern Europe once she will graduate, as a big part of her family lives there. She told me that she feels much freer in Scandinavian countries and wants to build her life there, *"far away from my parents"*. Hence, she was aspiring to continue her studies in Denmark or in the Netherlands.

She was still struggling with both her weight and her low self-esteem. *"I made my father pay for a gym membership and in the first months lost 25 kg. But then I went to visit my relatives, stopped exercising and after coming back to Palermo never went to that gym again. I lack discipline and I don't believe in my own strength; I know this about myself. I just don't really think that I can finish anything..."*

She later said that stopped going to the gym also because she was feeling judged and insecure. In her opinion, her lack of confidence and *"passive personality"* is also fuelled to some point by her resentment towards her parents. Dilana worked on this while she was in the community, but in the past years she stopped working with a psychologist.

Overall, she told me that she blames herself for being overweight and that she knows what to do, just that she cannot stay consistent. And this, in her opinion, really influences her quality of life. *"I'm tired of being so big, because I want to do many things in my life. I love going out, seeing people, and my weight doesn't allow me to live my life like I want to. I feel closed off, I'm always at home"*.

She feels like what had happened to her could've happened also in Sri Lanka and would've been seen as normal disciplinary methods. However, she also feels like after the teachers in her elementary school discovered that she was a victim of domestic violence, they chose not to act

only because she was from a migrant family. *“If it was an Italian child coming from an Italian family, they would’ve seen his or her burned hands and reported this straight ahead. But they thought that if it’s a Sri Lankan girl from a Sri Lankan family, they shouldn’t get involved”*. She told me that she tries not to think about how her life could’ve turned if she was placed in a protective housing when she was 8. Otherwise she gets too upset.

Regarding other Sri Lankan G1.5 in Italy, Dilana says that they usually either listen to everything their parents tell them to do (*“like that girl that told my parents I was bulimic”*), or rebel against them in everything – go out with Italian teenagers, start dating and *“don’t feel like Sri Lankans at all”*. *“The weirdest thing about my story is that I was always the good girl. I never rebelled. I always did everything that my parents were telling me to do. But still they were so angry at me that at some point I was scared for my life”*.

According to Dilana’s experience, the Sri Lankan community in Europe, and especially in Italy, is very closed off and not open to any change. She says that her family in Denmark is much more Europeanised than any of the Sri Lankan families she knows in Italy. *“They remain closed off and live here like they are still in a small town in Sri Lanka. Everyone sees everything, gossips, gets into another people’s business”*.

She told me that she knows many other cases of domestic violence amongst G1.5 of different origins – some of them she met in school, others in the community house or at the university. In her opinion, domestic violence is normalised in many communities – Sri Lankan, Moroccan, Bangladeshi – and is not seen as a crime by the generation of her parents.

## **Andi and Priya**

*“For us to be together she had to run away from her parents without her documents”*

### **Andi**

**Gender:** male

**Age at the time of the interview:** 36

**Origins/place of birth:** Jeffna, Sri Lanka

**Migrated in:** first time in 1984, second time in 1991 **at the age of:** 3 and 10

**Currently lives:** Palermo, Italy

**Marital status:** married to Priya, has two kids

**Current employment status:** entrepreneur

### **Priya**

**Gender:** female

**Age at the time of the interview:** 33

**Origins/place of birth:** Sri Lanka

**Migrated in:** 1996 **at the age of:** 12

**Currently lives:** Palermo, Italy

**Marital status:** married to Andi, had two kids

**Current employment status:** teacher

**Date and location of the interview:** 06.04.2018, Palermo, Italy (Mounir)

Although Priya and Andi knew that my research is based on one-on-one interviews, they came to speak to me together. Andi explained it by the fact that Priya is a very shy and reserved person and doesn't speak much, hence it would've been difficult for her to give an interview on her own.

Andi was born in Jaffna, Sri Lanka in a Catholic family. His father was living in Italy since 1980 and Andi came here for the first time in 1984 at the age of 3. He doesn't remember many details about that visit however. Only the fact that there were very few Sri Lankans in Palermo at that

time, and even fewer Sri Lankan children. In the retrospect, he says that the major part of those G1.5 children have left Palermo when they grew up. *“There are only two of us left here. The other guy is married to an Italian woman and has his own shop. Everyone else left”*.

When he turned 7, his parents took him back to Sri Lanka. He says that they left him with his aunt, signed him up for a school there and told him that they will come to visit him every vacation. *“But after they left me there, the war was becoming more and more serious and in the end my mom had to come and take me back to Italy”*.

Hence, in 1991 Andi came to Italy again. At that point he was about 11 years old and immediately started going to school in Palermo. *“At first I’ve received everything! They were spitting on me, kicking me, everything! I was destroyed, terrorised... Didn’t even want to go there”*. He was describing all these bullying with a laughter, but attests it to his own personality, because *“by all means it wasn’t an easy time”*.

However, he says that every generation of Sri Lankan G1.5 in Palermo were going to that school, as there was a special class for Sri Lankans created there. *“Not even foreigners, just us, Sri Lankans. Everyone, even those who live far away, send their children there for them to be together with other Sri Lankans”*.

Andi says that he wasn’t the best student, never really felt like he enjoyed studying, and the situation at school wasn’t helping.

Regarding his family’s point of view on this, Andi says that his parents didn’t really know how to approach the topic of education. His generation in the first one that was continuously going to school. He remembers that when he couldn’t understand some of the homework and was asking his parents for help, they were taking his school books to their work places and asking for help from their co-workers.

However, he feels lucky as his father was speaking Italian and his mother was also trying to learn the language. *“In most of the families the children were the first and only Italian speakers. The parents were not even interested. And they were telling their children: “Go to school just not to sit at home. When the war will end, I will send you back to Sri Lanka”*. On the other hand, they were never considering moving back to Sri Lanka themselves.

He stopped his studies in Italy after the middle school as his parents also never wanted him to stay in Italy and were always hoping that he will go back to Sri Lanka when the war will end. *“They were waiting, waiting, but the war was not ending, So, they decided to send me to France to my uncle, as French is my third language and they wanted me to improve it”*.

Andi stayed in France and continued his education there for three years. But, as he never had a French residence permit and his parents were living in Italy, at some point he started having problems with his documents and was forced to come back to Palermo in 1998. He was about to turn 18 and was eligible for his own Italian residence permit. However, he says that at those times it was impossible for him to get a residence permit by continuing his education and enrolling into the university, hence he had to abandon his studies and started working to receive his documents.

He says that in his generation of Sri Lankan G1.5 everyone had to do the same thing. *“Now everyone goes to the university, continues to study. We didn’t get that chance. When we were turning 18, we had to leave everything and go to work to have a contract. We had to live through these difficulties”*.

At first, he was helping with his father, who was working night shifts at an auto repair shop. Later he decided to move to Asti to work in a retirement home, where he got certified as a care giver for elderly. There he spent 4 year, and then returned to Palermo. He told me that it was quite difficult for him there, as he was one of a very few foreigners in a small town and didn’t have any social circle there.

When he came back to Palermo for a vacation, he met Priya. *“I came back, saw her and everything ended. I knew I will not go back to Asti for sure! Well, I made my decision before, but this is when I knew that it was the right one!”*.

Priya was born in Sri Lanka in a Hindu family, and arrived in Italy in 1996 at the age of 11. Her father was already living in Italy and acting as a director of the first Tamil school in Palermo. Hence, Priya was living in Sri Lanka with her mother and older sister, and later came to Italy with them on a family reunification visa.

She finished the elementary school in Palermo and later studied in a private school to learn English better. Andi explained it this way: *“For our community it’s very important to learn English. Other languages as well, but especially English”*.



She said it was also quite difficult for her, as both her and Andi lived in an underprivileged neighbourhood where foreigners couldn't feel welcome and were treated badly.

Her parents weren't very integrated – her mother was always very religious and closed off, and till the moment of the interview didn't speak any Italian. Priya told me that since they moved to Italy, her mother only really wants to go back to Sri Lanka and just live there. Her father, on the contrary, is not religious at all and speaks a little bit of Italian. But in general, as a family they were quite closed off and separated from the Italian society.

After Priya graduated from high school, she started working at her father's school as a teacher. She was also a dancer and danced in all the Sri Lankan community celebrations. Andi was singing and was also often invited to perform at festivities. They met there and, in Andi's words, this is how they got "*imprinted on each other*". As Priya was the teacher of Andi's sister, he was looking for any occasion to see her and volunteered to bring his sister to school every day.

Andi says that their relationships were a shock to the whole community. "*Everyone knew who she was and who I was. She was the good girl, a teacher, from a respected family. I was the bad boy, and no one expected much from me*".

Even though her mother didn't know anything about their relationship, her father found out about it very fast and thought the worst of him. He never wanted Priya to marry him for a variety of reasons, the first one being – she was supposed to have an arranged marriage, as it is commonly done. Second issue was their religion, as Priya was a Hindu, and Andi was a Catholic. The third issue was that they belonged to different casts.

The other problem for Priya's father, as for the whole Sri Lankan community of Palermo, was the fact that Andi, in his own words, was very different from other Sri Lankans. For them he wasn't a "*good guy*". He explains it by the fact that he was integrated into the Italian society quite well, had many friends from different countries, including Italians and Mauritian, was smoking and in general had a reputation of a "*bad boy*". One of the main problems for them was the fact that Andi had not only male, but also female friends. "*For them it was just outrageous – if they see you with a girl on the street, even if she is just your friend, they start gossiping straight ahead. And it's like it was broadcasted on TV – everyone knows about it in a few hours*".

Andi's parents, in his opinion, were thinking the same thing, as he wasn't living according to the community traditions and was "*going out with Italians too much*". Hence, they were actually

happy when Andi started dating Priya – they saw her as someone who can influence him in a positive way. Andi jokes that at that point his mom had finally calmed down and stopped worrying for his future. *“They were scared that I will marry an Italian girl, or a girl from Mauritius, or a girl who smokes”*.

After Priya’s father heard about her feeling for Andi, he did everything to stop them from seeing each other. She wasn’t allowed to use a phone, to go out by herself or do anything apart from teaching. It came to the point when it was forbidden for her to come close to windows, because Andi was circling around her house on his motorbike trying to see her. *“They didn’t want us to even see each other. If they saw me downstairs, they were switching off the lights at home”*.

But even despite all that, Andi and Priya were managing to contact each other from time to time. Seeing this, her father got scared that she will run away to get married. Hence, he decided to send her off to her relatives in Germany.

Andi and Priya knew from the beginning that they will have this problem. Andi says that when they had just begin dating, he initiated a conversation about a possible solution. *“I told her – for sure your father will not be happy. If one day I will call you, will you come to marry me despite all of this?”*

However, it was Priya who called him one day to say that they couldn’t wait anymore – her parents have already prepared everything for her to move to Germany, so he had to come and pick her up at that moment. At that point she was 21, and Andi was 24 years old.

That day Andi told everything to his mother. *“I said that she wants to come to our house, because there is a problem with her parents”*. His parents were also aware of the fact that Priya’s father will never agree to their marriage and said that it was useless to even try to talk to him – it could’ve only brought them more problems.

Andi remembers that his father told him to bring Priya to their home only if she will come to the meeting point herself, and not to go to look for her if she will not come. *“I took my motorbike and went to pick her up – she came without anything, just with her everyday bag”*.

Priya left her parents a long letter explaining her decision. She says that at her time her mother was still unaware of what was going on and was actually admiring Andi a lot as a singer. So, she found out about everything from the letter.

Andi says that half an hour after he picked Priya up and brought her to his home, her father was already there to take his daughter back. All of Andi's friends and his five uncles came to their house for support and stayed there the whole evening.

Andi's father said that Priya's father can take his daughter back home if she will agree to return with him. Priya refused, and Andi's father proposed to organise a wedding on a neutral territory. Priya's father agreed, but after two days contacted them and said that he doesn't care about what is going to happen to his daughter.

In the following days the friends of Priya's family were coming to speak to Andi's father, uncle and other relatives, and there was a lot on tension. Andi says that even if their story happened in Sri Lanka, there this would've meant a war between two families – very violent one and with the use of weapons. And the family with more relatives and support would've won.

Overall, they both agreed that their migrant condition helped them, as Priya's father didn't have many relatives in Palermo and had no possibility to start a physical fight between two clans in Italy. Andi's family, on the contrary, was very big. Hence, they both feel very lucky that they have met in Italy, managed to get married and even fixed their relationships with Priya's parents later.

At that time Priya's residence permit was still attached to her father's and she had just applied for a residence card. Her father refused to come to an appointment in the immigration office, as without this document she couldn't have become autonomous. Andi and Priya ended up requesting a residence permit for 6 months for her and went back to Sri Lanka to get married. It was her first time going back home since the migration. *“Her father didn't want to sign the documents that would allow us to get married. So, I took her to Sri Lanka and asked one of her cousins to sign it. I convinced him”.*

In 2006 they moved to Milan, as Andi found a job in Mantua. Both he and Priya said that they moved mostly because it was very difficult for them to live in Palermo and see her parents every day.

In Andi's words, after their first daughter was born, Priya's parents “calmed down” and decided to work on their relationships and be present in their granddaughter's life. Hence, in 2009 they decided to return to Palermo, when their second daughter was born.

At the time of the interview Priya and their daughters already had the Italian citizenship. Andi said that it was quite difficult for them to organize it, as they had to show a certain level of income for all of the family members. Hence, he had to postpone getting a citizenship himself.

They were preparing to move to London, as they saw more work opportunities there.

Andi told me that the conditions for Sri Lankan G1.5 in Palermo had changed now and it is easier to be different. *“Now you can see all these mixed groups of friends on the street – one Sri Lankan, one African, one Italian. In my times if there was someone of my skin colour in a group of Italians, it for sure was me”*.

Andi says that as their community came to Italy not because of economic problems, but because of the war, many families are still dreaming about going back home. He told me that in Sri Lanka his father owns two private houses and would've been able to live the life of a stable middle class. Same goes for other Sri Lankans in Italy - they are very much aware of the fact that back in Sri Lanka they can live a much better life, earn more and not to be forced to do low qualification jobs for a minimal income. This is what stops them from really integrating into the society and learning the language, as they don't see Italy as their final destination, but only a temporary safe stop until the war and all of its aftermath will end.

That's why his and many other families are remaining very closed off and traditional as well - they are trying to preserve their community as it was back in Sri Lanka before the war.

One of the types of domestic violence that, according to Andi and Priya, is very normalized in their culture is arranged marriages. Andi gave me an example of his cousin, who had to end a relationship with a girl he loved and marry a girl his parents chose for him, even though he was very unhappy with this situation. In Andi's opinion, even though his cousin is still living with his wife, this was never a happy marriage.

According to their knowledge, there have been couples, that run away from their parents and got married for love about 6 years before them. After that there was the story of Andi and Priya – two of the community members that were very well known.

*“P: It was like a beginning of the new era. Everyone started running away from arranged marriages.*

*A: Yes, it's like we have opened the door for them”*.

However, Andi also says that even despite this, things didn't change that drastically inside their community.

He gave me two examples of his friends. One of them ran away from home with his girlfriend to get married. After two days the girl's father found them and verbally agreed to a wedding between them after one month. She returned home and was sent away to London in a few days. Andi's friend had to marry another girl in Palermo.

In another case the guy and the girl were from different casts. Her parents after some debate also agreed to a wedding in Rome in a few weeks, and within 2-3 days their whole family disappeared. Andi's friend was desperate and with the help of his friends and family was looking for them for months. After some time, they found out that that family moved to Reggio Emilia. Later they have sent girl to Switzerland, where she married to a Swiss man. *"So, the casts that are supposed to be so important for them, matter only when a guy is from Sri Lanka. They stop thinking about this when he is a European"*. In the end the guy had to marry a Sri Lankan girl, chosen by his family.

As for religion, Andi says that in his opinion Hindu religion has no chances of reformation, even though he sees a big change in the new generation. For example, now dating between Sri Lankan youth is not seen as something forbidden and the young G1.5 and G2.0 are a little bit freer to choose their social groups. Andi, however, says that they *"will always have a problem at home eventually"*. He also told me that he knows of many cases of honorary killings in Hindu communities due to relationships with lower cast members or people of different religious beliefs. Priya agreed with him, but added that as far as she knows it happens mostly in India and is not a common issue in Sri Lanka. However, she said that in a different context, a relationship like theirs could've seen as a reason for an honorary killing.

Both Priya and Andi agreed that, in their opinion, integration policies will not help the situation that much. The key to resolving this problem for them lies in the education and the change of generations.

## Margot

*“If a man is violent, he will never change”*

**Gender:** female

**Age at the time of the interview:** 60

**Origins/place of birth:** Huancavelica, Peru

**Migrated in:** 2000 **at the age of:** 42

**Currently lives in:** Turin, Italy

**Marital status:** married with children

**Current employment status:** cultural mediator, community leader and one of the founders of an association for Peruvian women in Turin.

**Date and location of the interview:** 20.03.2017, Turin, Italy (Bar degli Luoghi Comuni)

Margot is from Peru. She came to Italy in 2000 and since then resides in Turin with her husband. She has two grown-up children – her daughter came to Italy on a student visa when she was 18, her son moved to Italy on a family reunification visa when he was 19.

Margot is one of the founders of an association for Peruvian women in Turin. She describes it as *“an association that aims at helping Peruvian women in difficult situations”*. Margot says that the association was created out of a necessity. Many women come to Italy from Peru alone to find a job and later bring their families. As the result they live a very lonely life for a few years – they leave their families back home, have no social circle in Turin, work long hours and don't know where to go in their free time. So, the association creates a free space for them to meet, communicate, and, as Margot puts it, live their *“Peruvian-ness”* a little.

As Margot is both a mother of two G1.5 representatives and a community leader, we spoke with her about the situation with domestic violence in the Peruvian community in Italy, causes of DV against women and G1.5 and specific cases she assisted in. During the interview she decided to share her own experience of a deep-rooted conflict between her and her G1.5 son that escalated from the particular migration patterns and lack of communication.

Regarding Peruvian families migrating to Italy, Margot told me that in the majority of cases women come to Italy first, because for men it's quite difficult to find a job, but for women it is "very easy". The majority of Peruvian women (Margot says their percentage is estimated at almost 80%) usually find jobs as care-givers or babysitters, take care of elderly in hospitals, rest homes or work in families.

Their husbands are staying in Peru with their children. In rare cases children, usually the youngest ones, can come to Italy with their mothers. But, according to Margot's experience, it doesn't happen often - those who migrate first, dedicate all of their time to looking for an official job and making invitations for the rest of their families.

When they organize their lives in Italy – start working officially, rent an apartment, prepare all the documents etc. – they can start the family reunification process and bring their families to Italy. This process can take quite a long time.

Margot sees three main patterns of domestic violence in Peruvian families in Italy, where children (G1.5) are used as an instrument of violence by a perpetrator or are suffering directly. In all these cases the fact of migration and its specific patterns are playing the main role.

First pattern is intimate partner violence, in which a husband is the perpetrator, and a wife/mother is the victim. In this case children are often witness domestic violence that occurs in their home or are used by their fathers to cause more pain to their mothers.

Margot says that in traditional Peruvian culture women are supposed to be submissive to their husband. *"We say that in a family it's a man who "wears trousers" – meaning that men work, bring money home, sustain their families. And women have to take care of homes. Some of them work too, but at the same time they have to do everything at home"*.

The conflict starts when a woman comes to Italy and lives a self-sufficient life for a few years. Margot states that for many of them it's their first experience of working and supporting themselves and a first opportunity to build up their self-esteem. *"They understand that here the society is different – it's more open, women gained more rights and feel freer"*.

In Margot's experience of being a community leader for the past 18 years, the problem is that their husbands are not able to accept their new views and values. When they arrive on a family reunification visa, they *"find different wives, not those whom they knew before. The wives who are*

*not submissive anymore, who won't ask for their approval. Now they don't ask whether they can go out. A husband cannot say: "If you are going out, be home by this time". No! Instead, his wife is going to tell him: "I'm going out, and I will be back when I will be back".*

In Margot's words, the husbands also leave through a time of anxiety and frustration, because they are not prepared for this change in their families and don't know any other family pattern than the traditional one.

Many starts acting violently when they finally find a stable job and start feeling equal to their women again. After they get a job, they feel confident enough to try and reform their families back to what they are used to in Peru. But, as Margot states, it normally doesn't work, *"because their wives are not going to accept it anymore"*. At this stage, according to Margot, if a man has a *"violent personality"*, he starts showing it.

Amongst most common types of domestic violence, she names *"all the things that make women submissive – physical violence, stalking, threats, limiting her free time etc."*

In situations like this, children are often used by fathers to guilt their mothers out (about leaving their families behind, coming to Italy just to enjoy their lives etc.) or to cause them more pain.

*"And then children, with their father's help, are often taking his side, not the mother's. Children at this stage are very easy to manipulate, because they also lived through many things, they also found their mothers very different, not like the mothers they had before. So, they also are angry and start telling them: "It is all your fault!" And women start feeling even worse"*.

Margot remembers the case of a woman who was suffering severe physical violence from her husband. The family had three G1.5 children – 7, 10 and 12 years old, who were born in Peru and arrived in Italy 3 years before this, at the age of 4, 7 and 9. They were witnessing their father physically abusing their mother for some time already.

The mother came to Margot and her colleagues for help but refused to report her husband, because he was the father of her children, and she was hoping he will change. *"She was saying: "Maybe he will change... Maybe if I will give him more children... Maybe we will still manage to stay together..."*

The situation was escalating very fast and at one point she ended up in the hospital with serious injuries. At this point Margot had to threaten her in order to make her report her husband. She says



that she is still genuinely ashamed of this, but she had to do it for their wellbeing. *“I had to tell her: “If they see you being beaten every day and you are not reporting him, I will! And I will have them take your children away from you for negligence”. This is what I had to do. Only because of this she went to police and reported him. She doesn’t know that I would’ve never done it. Never! I was just threatening! I was scared that he will kill her”*.

Only after this the woman reported her husband. He was arrested and the woman was placed into a protected housing together with her children.

But this is only one a very few cases when a woman actually asked for help in any form. In most of the cases Margot and her colleagues just provide women with information about their rights, but cannot do anything without victim’s own decision to report the perpetrator.

In the majority of cases they act in an informal way, as described below – speak to both sides, use their influence etc. Margot says that there were also cases of a positive change when a perpetrator got a chance to speak to other men in the community – to his friends, a community leader etc.: *“When they spoke and shared their experiences, they [violent men] managed to understand it and change”*. But these cases are not many, because *“there are many men who don’t want to change”*.

The second pattern of DV against children, according to Margot, is parents’ overprotectiveness, their fears of the new environment and normalization of violence in their original culture.

Many of the parents see physical violence as a normal disciplinary technique – this is how they were raised, so they see it as an adequate punishment for a variety of disobediences.

They also fear for their children as they encounter this new culture. Italy is often seen by them as a country where all teenagers drink and take drugs, which is one of the biggest fears for Peruvian parents.

Margot says that in her opinion, out of these two vices Peruvians are more flexible regarding alcohol, because they *“drink a lot during holidays and celebrations”*. But still it’s considered as a normal line of behaviour only for men. *“For us a drunk woman is the worst thing ever, however men can get drunk whenever they want”*.

But drugs, including marihuana, is a different topic. She says that it’s a bit more normalized only in a few parts of Peru, but *“it’s not okay for all the teenagers to smoke it! Absolutely not!”*

So, Margot says, that violence is often used by parents out of fear for their children's lives and wellbeing – as a way of disciplining them and not letting them pick up bad habits.

She told me about a case she assisted in, but, in her own words, couldn't do much. It concerned a Peruvian girl who came to Italy when she was 14. When she was 16, Margot once noticed that she had some problem with her forearm. *"I asked her: "Hey, how are you?" and touched her arm. And she just jumped up"*. The girl said that she fell down and hurt herself, but Margot made her roll up her sleeve and saw a big bruise that couldn't have been caused by a fall. After this the girl started crying and told her that it wasn't the first time her father hit her. This time it was because she went out with her Italian friends to dance, broke her father's curfew (came back at 21:30 instead of 20:00) and had drunk alcohol.

Margot was very conflicted about what she had to do. She decided to speak to the father and confronted him about the bruise on his daughter's forearm. He was denying it, but after some time admitted that he did hit the girl. *"He sat down and started talking: "Okay, okay! I hit her! I'm very sorry about it, trust me! But I cannot let this girl, my daughter, to come home drunk at 21:30! She is 16, not 18, not 20! What would you have done in my place?"* Margot explained him that she didn't feel like using violence is the adequate reaction to this situation, that this is a criminal offence in Italy and that it's not taken lightly. *"Here [in Italy] if you hit her for any reason, they will take her away from you and put you in prison! I saw what you have done to her, so don't expect me to feel sorry for you"*.

But the man was very confused. He was telling Margot that violence is the only instrument he has to ensure that his daughter wouldn't go out, drink and take drugs, because *"Italy is not like our country – here they have all these things everywhere"*. Not being able to do more, Margot suggested him to seek out professional help – from a psychologist, a teacher, a social worker. And told him that she hoped not to see any bruises on his daughter ever again, because in this case she will report him to the police.

But this family chose to send the girl back to Peru to live, as they called it, in a *"protected environment"*. At the time of the interview she was already a student at the Lima University.

Margot sees the parent's decision as *"choosing not to give her many opportunities she could've had in Italy"* and *"the third abandonment"*. According to her, the first abandonment Peruvian G1.5 in Italy experience when their mothers are leaving for Italy. The second one – when they

themselves have to leave their homes and come to Italy to reunite with their families. And the third one – when they are sent back to Peru. In Margot's experience it doesn't happen a lot, but there are cases similar to this one. She was also sure that she found out about this case of DV completely by accident, as the girl would've never told any adult about what was happening in her family.

The third pattern for potentially violent situation also develops from the specific characteristics of G1.5, such as abandonment, cultural shock and lack of communication.

Margot, as a mother of two G1.5 children, thinks that most of them, having lived through at least two separations, tend to become reserved, angry and are prone to acting out. *“They create an illusion of a mom, all perfect. When they finally see her again, she is nothing like that image. It's a great disappointment for them. So, they are very angry. Of course, even in this case it also depends on their and their parents' personality. The relationship with their mothers can be repaired only if they speak. If they don't speak, it will be impossible...”*

She told me her personal story. She came to Italy in 2000 and, to do so, had to leave her 17-year old son in Peru. When he was 19, she managed to bring him to Italy. She says that at first, when he just arrived, he was very happy to see her, hugged her and seemed to be very content. But in the following 10-11 months she noticed that he became quite closed off. *“And then it was his birthday, we made a party, his friends came, they drank... And then, when everyone left, I told him that it was time to go to bed. And he just pushed me away violently, screaming very angrily: “Leave me alone! Leave me!” I got scared. And my husband, who is a very calm, peaceful man, said: “Okay, let's just leave him alone for now”. So, my son went to sleep, and I was feeling horribly”.*

She says that it all could've ended up very differently. Many Peruvian families in Italy remain strictly patriarchal, but respect a special position of a mother in. Hence, a violent outburst from children against their mothers can and in many cases will become a cause for an escalation of violence.

Next morning over breakfast Margot initiated a conversation – asked him what happened, why was he acting like this. She says that at that moment she realised, that it was the first time they really spoke in a while. *“And he told me: “I don't love you anymore, because you left me! Do you know what I lived through? Do you know how is it to be all by yourself, without your mother, without anyone? Okay, yes, I had food and a roof over my head. But you left me! You left me!” He*

*didn't even want to hear anything I had to say. "You were living a nice life here! You were living your life without thinking about me!"*

The family couldn't get through to him and Margot accepted the fact that at that point she couldn't do anything.

The situation got resolved in an unexpected way. Margot's association organised an event – a meeting of Peruvian mothers from the first generation and G1.5 youngsters, who were not their children. It was organised with a help of volunteering psychologists and with the aim to bridge the gap between generations and speak about the issue of abandonment. Margot's son was also participating, but she was an organiser and an observer.

First the mothers spoke about their experience in Italy – how hard it was for them, how lonely they felt without their families, how hard they worked to bring them to Italy. Margot remembers that everyone was very open and described many painful memories from those times. Then the youngsters spoke about their experience – loneliness, missing their mothers, etc.

Margot says that it was a sort of a reconciliation, because different generations had an opportunity to talk. *"In the end the children hugged those mothers, who were not their moms, and the mothers cried... I was just observing, I didn't participate. But when we arrived home, my son hugged me: "Mom, I had no idea, I swear!"* After this they worked more on their relationships and managed to overcome these difficulties. At the time of the interview her son was already a 36-year old man with his own family.

Margot sees DV in a Peruvian community as a serious, deep-rooted problem that is very difficult to confront. In her everyday work she sees that Peruvians chose not to report cases of domestic violence at all. If anyone comes to her to speak about violence in their family, she gives them all the necessary support and information on how to report a perpetrator to the police. But she says that it almost never happens – women she works with chose to *"take it until you cannot do it anymore"*, meaning suffering until the situation will become truly unbearable and dangerous. Children and youngsters who are suffering violence (witnessed or direct), also rarely speak up as they are afraid that they will not find any support - DV is really normalised as a disciplinary measure and the *"father's right"*. Even when a situation becomes dangerous, the more common way of asking for help both for women and for children will be to speak to a friend or to any of the community leaders. It's not common to speak about any of the family's problems to the family

members back in Peru – Margot stressed this point out as a very important issue: *“the family in Peru cannot know about our sufferings in Italy”*.

As for the church’s part in addressing the issue of DV, Margot felt unsure. She stated that, even though Peruvian community often organises itself around a church and uses it as a communal space, designated for prayer, celebrations and communal meals, it is not a place where one can go to seek out help in a situation of domestic violence. *“Every Sunday morning, we all are there for the mass, all together. So, in a place like this you don’t speak about these types of problems”*. She stated that she feels shame when she has to criticise the church, because she is *“Catholic, very Catholic”*. But at the same time, she explains this situation by the fact that some of the priests still *“have patriarchal ideas”* and to every woman or a young person, who speaks up about the violence they experience *“they can say: “You have to be submissive, you have to do this and that... Women exist to help their men... Father always knows what’s better for you...”*

Hence, people who come to speak to Margot mostly suffer for long time before they get the courage to ask for help. *“We are speaking with them. We are organizing meetings, speaking about many things, telling them about violence, about what we can do. Once we invited a social worker to speak about domestic violence, she brought all the laws with her – about children, about women. The only thing we can do is to give them some information, to listen to what they are willing to tell us, to suggest them: “Do this, do that”. But if they will not show initiative, we cannot help them”*.

So, as was stated earlier, the major part of the cases remains unreported.

When I asked Margot if she can suggest me some people from the community who will be willing to give me an interview about their experience with violence, she said that already asked a few women, but they all refused. She says that it didn’t surprise her: *“...for a woman that experienced violence... it is very difficult for them to speak about it, because it’s a part of our culture. We don’t speak about our problems with other, we don’t complain”*.

By the end of the interview I asked Margot about the perception of violence in the community.

*Maryna: If I will ask a Peruvian woman what is violence, what will she tell me?*

*Margot: For us violence is mostly rape. This is what we clearly see as violence. But if your husband hurts you physically, stalks you – this is not considered as violence.*

*Maryna: And if he is not allowing you to go out, doesn't give you money, not allowing you to study?*

*Margot: Forget about it... This is seen as a norm.*

## Andrea

**Gender:** female

**Age at the time of the interview:** 27

**Origins/place of birth:** Lima, Peru

**Migrated in: 2000 at the age of:** 10

**Currently lives in:** Milan, Italy

**Marital status:** single

**Current employment status:** cultural mediator, translator, student, a published book author

**Date and location of the interview:** 19.03.2018, via Skype

Andrea was born in Lima, Peru and is one of 7 children. She came to Italy together with her sister when Andrea was 10 years old, and her sister was 9. Their mother was already living in Italy at that time for about one year and a half. As the entire family was planning to eventually move to Italy, she went first to find a job and organize their move. In December 2000 she managed to make a family reunification visa for her youngest daughters to come and live with her.

Andrea was living with the idea of eventually going to live in Italy for as long as her mother was away. However, she remembers herself being both excited and not excited by this perspective. *“I wanted to see my mom and at that age I didn’t have many strong connections to Peru. But on the other hand, I didn’t even want to think about leaving my relatives and friends, who I just met... It wasn’t like for grown-ups, but it was still difficult”.*

At that time, she was living with the rest of her big family and created strong bonds with them, hence, as she told me, re-meeting her mother after 1.5 years was *“weird”*. Andrea says that she was feeling this weirdness in almost everything – new food, the town where her mother was living, new school and new classmates.

Andrea remembers that the most difficult task for them was to get used to their mother again, as she was *“both unfamiliar and familiar”*, as well as the new pace of life that they have never experienced before.

When they arrived, their mother was living in a small town outside of Milan. She was working multiple jobs and didn't have much time to dedicate to taking her daughters to and from school. *"This was a bit of a shock for me. I was so used to have everyone around me – my friends, siblings, my father... We were always outside... I had to get used to a new dynamic"*.

However, Andrea says that due to the fact that, despite all the weirdness, both she and her sister were very happy to reunite with their mother, and because they were together, she never felt abandoned. *"Not like many other Peruvian children in Italy"*.

Andrea and her sister started going to school and were really enjoying it despite the fact that she had to repeat the last year of the elementary school. She arrived in December and was supposed to graduate from elementary school in a few months, but because of the language and the obligatory final exams had to start the final year from the beginning. Her sister, however, was just inserted into a class in which she was back in Peru.

They were only two foreigners in school. Hence, there were no special teacher's aide who would've helped them to integrate to an Italian school better. Andrea says that they both were just coming to classes and trying to understand what the teacher was explaining. In retrospect, she feels like this situation actually helped her to become more independent and to learn Italian faster. She also told me that she found it very easy to start understanding Italian because of its similarities with Spanish, but very difficult to express herself.

As for the cultural differences, Andrea says that the biggest surprise for her were interpersonal relationships. *"In Peru I had a friend and we were always at each other's homes – playing, speaking, etc. In Italy I had to literally make appointments with my new friends if I wanted to spend some time after school with them. And it was like reaching the president – all these kids were so busy every day! Theatre, swimming, basketball..."*

Both Andrea and her sister were ridiculed for not speaking Italian and being foreigners by some of their classmates. With those who were friendlier, they were having difficulties with communication, so during the time they spent in that school they felt very excluded by children.

At the same time, the teachers were always very helpful and understanding. Andrea says that some of them were speaking Spanish, some weren't, but everyone was trying to understand her and help her adapt faster.



Andrea remembers constantly asking her mother why they moved to Italy, why they have to learn this new language and go to school with people who don't want to be friends with them. However, she told me that even though in general it was difficult for her to find friends and create relationships with other kids in school, she also found it easy in some sense, as she had no option but to learn fast.

Andrea's father moved to Italy two years later than her and her sister, as he needed to organise things back home and get a visa. Re-meeting him was much easier, as Andrea remembers, and didn't feel as weird as it was with her mother. She explains it by the facts that in that time she was already a bit older and that she was always much more attached to her mother, than her father, hence meeting her after 1,5 years has made more impact on her. *"Of course, I was missing him, but I knew who he was. I really appreciate that time that we have spent back in Peru without my mother. During that time my father was both a father and a mother for us. He was doing everything he could to make things easier for us"*.

Things, however, became different, especially for Andrea's father, as in the beginning he had difficulties with finding a job. It took him about three months, but, as Andrea remembers, it wasn't an easy time for a person like him. *"He wasn't used to not being in charge"*. A big issue for him was the language – it took him a long time to learn it.

Three of her siblings – two sisters and a brother - came to Italy later, but after trying to adapt to the new life for some time realized that they want to go back to Peru and live there. They were all in their late thirties (35-38 years old). *"I think for me and my sister it was easier to adapt, because we were so little. We wanted to build our lives here and so we did. My brothers, however, were adults and had their own vision of their future. They chose another way"*.

Her family was keeping close relationships with the Peruvian community in Milan, and they were attending all the celebrations. Andrea says that those were happy moments for her, as everything was familiar – food, music, language. When she became older, she was going to Milan by herself – to spend time with her friends, other Peruvian G1.5.

From the cultural point Andrea's family remained *"very Peruvian"*. They are speaking Spanish at home, celebrate Peruvian holidays and cook Peruvian food. Hence, Andrea says, she never had a problem with becoming too Italian. *"It was more like – I'm still too Peruvian"*. This created an internal question for her – she told me that till this day she feels like she has a double identity.

*“When I speak with Peruvians, they say that I speak Spanish with an Italian accent. When I speak Italian with Italians, they say that I sometimes sound like a Spanish speaker”.*

She says that she is proud of having both identities, but on the other hand she feels neither. *“When I’m abroad and someone is asking me where I’m from, I cannot tell them ‘I’m Italian’. Because I’m not”.* It is the issue that interests her a lot; hence she is trying to understand her own perception of her identity and *“organise it”* in her mind.

At the time of the interview she had already applied for an Italian citizenship, but, according to her, it was done *“only for my personal comfort”*. *“My sister became a citizen a few years ago, but I was resisting. I knew that even when I will stand under the Italian flag, it will not help me feel more Italian. But in the end, I know that it will be more convenient for me to have a passport”.*

Later she told me that she feels so dubious about obtaining a citizenship because her sister is still constantly asked for her residence permit in the airport, even when she is presenting her Italian passport at the desk. *“When you are a foreigner, you are always, always asked to present something more”*. She says that her sister also received her citizenship mostly because it will be easier for her to have the carrier that she wants to have in the future this way.

Andrea told me that she feels like her generation is completely invisible in Italy and that no one speaks about their conditions and past. She doesn’t feel like she can be a part of the “second generations” (as it was discussed in previous chapters, G1.5 in Italy is often referred to as one of the “second generations”) as she wasn’t born in Italy and doesn’t feel like they have many *“common battles”*. *“For example, the discussions regarding Jus Soli – I have nothing to do with it, I cannot relate”*.

She feels like G1.5 in Italy is constantly under the pressure of self-identification, and, at the same time, don’t really know who they are. Andrea says that many of her G1.5 peers start calling themselves the second generation in order to identify themselves at least in some way. *“We are neither first, not second generation, and it is amazing being neither”*.

At the time of the interview Andrea was studying international cooperation and was considering doing a master in migration.

Andrea says that in her experience, Peruvian G1.5 had less trouble adapting to their new life in Italy - there is a big Peruvian community in Milan and her friends always had an opportunity to

spend time with their co-nationals. But this created a different problem for them – many of them even after several years of living in Italy were speaking very limited Italian. Andrea says that they were feeling “*way too comfortable*” in their national group and were not motivated to learn the language and integrate into their new society.

Andrea says that many of them felt a strong sense of abandonment, both before the move, when they were left behind in Peru, and after the move, when they had to readjust to living with their parents and to adapt to the new life in Italy in general. This created many situations of tension, conflicts and even domestic violence in the families of many of her friends.

In her experience many of them had problems in school due to difficulties with the language and school assignments. Their attendance was also very poor as, in Andrea’s opinions, they were skipping school to spend more time with their Peruvian peers. Andrea and her sister, on the contrary, did very well in school. She says that they had more time to concentrate on their grades as they were living far away from that group and could only visit Milan and their friends on weekends. In her own words, from this point of view being socially excluded by her Italian peers and far away from her Peruvian ones actually helped her achieve more.

## Abbas

*“My parents are the people who let me down”.*

**Gender:** male

**Age at the time of the interview:** 31

**Origins/place of birth:** Lahore, Pakistan

**Migrated in:** 1999 **at the age of:** 15

**Currently lives in:** Bergamo, Italy

**Marital status:** single

**Current employment status:** movie director, human rights activist at Amnesty International – Italia, owner-operator at Allah Loves Equality, blogger at Il Grande Colibri

**Date and location of the interview:** 29.03.2017, Bergamo, Italy (Sapore Puro)

Wadjahat Abbas Kazmi is an Italian movie director, human rights activist, blogger and writer. At the time of the interview he was living in Bergamo for about 4 years and was collaborating with many human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International.

Born in Pakistan, he came to Italy in December 1999 at the age of 15 on a family reunification visa. He says, that at such a young age it clearly wasn't his, but his father's choice. He remembers that he moved to Italy during his last year of middle school in Pakistan, and was very happy about it, because it meant that he didn't have to take exams there. Instead he moved to Brescia with his family and went to the 7th grade (seconda media) there. Brescia wasn't a random choice – Abbas' parents wanted to be a part of the big Pakistani community, residing there.

Abbas describes his family as a middle class one, with five children – two sisters and three brothers, Abbas being the oldest one. *“We don't belong to an elite or something. My parents are not very educated – they studied until middle school. So, their mentality is the one of a small town in Pakistan”.*

Before the whole family moved to Italy, Abbas's father already lived there for 6 years, since 1994. In 1999 he made the request for a family reunification, but, as Abbas remembers, his family never

thought about really moving to Italy. Their plan was to stay in Brescia for 6-7 months, finish all the bureaucratic procedures, necessary to receive their residence permits and go back to Pakistan for the children to finish their education there.

Abbas remembers his school years as very difficult and unpleasant. It was challenging for him to learn the language, and he was scared to speak to his Italian classmates. He became the object of the biggest number of jokes in his class. He also wasn't good in playing in football, as it is not as popular in Pakistan as cricket. *"My team was always losing, and I was always feeling so ashamed! I used to be very active, and here everything changed"*.

In general, he feels like he suffered a lot of discrimination from his classmates, but never from teachers. Nevertheless, the only subject he really liked was English, as he already spoke it well and the teacher was very helpful. As well as other teachers in his school, he admits. The problem for him was not the lack of help at school, but that no one could help me with his homework at home.

As for his siblings, they adapted much faster and easier than Abbas. At the time of the migration his sister was 13 years old, the middle brother was going to elementary school and the youngest brother and sister – to kindergarten. *"They all were feeling very good – it was much easier for them. For me it was the most difficult. They never lived through all of this discrimination"*.

When Abbas started high school and as soon as he turned 18, his parents forced him to get engaged to his first cousin, daughter of his mother's sister who also lived in Brescia. According to him, it often happens in Pakistani families in Europe - when the oldest child turns 18, parents already start thinking if not about marriage yet, then about an engagement to someone they chose.

This engagement was also arranged. His parents organised a big engagement party in Brescia and invited all of the community. Abbas says that at the time he didn't even fully understood what was happening: *"They told me I was getting engaged and I, like many other teenagers, had to agree. I didn't know what to answer"*. He says that he was feeling very anxious and scared about this situation, because it coincided with him discovering his sexual orientation. *"At 18 you don't know anything about yourself, about your identity. Well, I knew a bit about my identity, my sexuality, the fact that I was gay... But I was hiding it, pretending like I don't know, and lying even to myself. I was thinking that it is just a problem, just a phase that will pass, because in the end everyone gets married"*.

Discovering his own sexuality in such conditions was very difficult for Abbas. He remembers feeling like it was just him who was “*abnormal*” or that homosexuality existed only in Pakistan and Italian wouldn’t even know anything about it. So, he was suppressing it for years, thinking that something was wrong with him and eventually he will get cured.

This engagement lasted for 8 years. Abbas feels like in this case he was very lucky to be both Muslim and Pakistani - it meant that he was engaged only officially, and didn’t have to “*really date*” his cousin (“*spend time together, go out, have any time of physical contact*”), as it is considered a sin before marriage.

He remembers being very scared of even an idea of coming out to his parent. One time he tried to check how they would’ve reacted by joking about not liking girls, and his mother got very angry and ended up threatening him that his father will take him to see a doctor if he will say something like this again. “*At that point I started laughing, turning everything into a joke again. But she took it very seriously, because probably she already had some suspicions and was waiting for me to say something*”.

As the time was passing, Abbas felt a lot of pressure from his family and the family of his uncle to get married as soon as possible. As an oldest child, he had an obligation to do it before any of his brothers and sisters in order to set a good example for them. He admits he wasn’t writing to his fiancée or even thinking about her at all. He was trying to find a way out of this situation. “*My father was always on my case about going to the mosque, reading the Quran... At some point I actually did become very religious – it was so easy to follow all the rules and, in this way, make everyone happy, so they would’ve leave me alone. I started saying to myself that my sexuality is a disease, that it is disgusting, that it’s a huge mistake and I just need to get healthy*”.

In the retrospect Abbas feels like his love for cinema saved his life. After the second year of high school he dropped out of school. “*I couldn’t take it anymore. It was very difficult for me to study in Italian, no one could help me, because even my father wasn’t speaking Italian, and we had no money for a tutor*”. In the search of a profession he took a few courses in Milan (IT, photography, cinematography) and met a Pakistani film director, who offered him a job – a place of a director’s assistant in Lahore for a year. In order to pursue this opportunity Abbas had a fight with his parents and left without their permission. “*For them it was weird – everyone comes from Pakistan to work in Europe, and I was going back to Pakistan...*”.

He says that this job changed his life – not only he gained all the necessary competences to continue his work as a movie director, but also learned a lot about LGBTQI+ community and rights. While Abbas was living in Italy, he still felt like he was living in Pakistan to some point – he didn't have many Italian friends, couldn't communicate fluently in Italian and mainly met Pakistani people *“from the same province, same class and with the same mentality... You cannot learn anything new from them”*. But when he started working in the movie industry in Lahore, he met many gay people from higher social class, who were quite open about their identity, despite the fact that homosexuality is a criminal offence in Pakistan. *“I understood who they were and they understood who I was. So, I said to myself: “Damn, they live in Pakistan and manage to be so open, so strong!”* Most of them couldn't understand why Abbas, living in Italy, where being gay is not a crime and LGBTQI+ people can live openly, still chooses to remain in the closet just to please his family. Abbas says that that experience is what finally gave him courage to come back to Italy. *“I wanted to finally take my life in my hands”*.

When Abbas came back to Italy, he decided to break his engagement at any cost. He explained to his family that he wants to work only in film making, travel to Pakistan a lot and cannot get married until he will start earning a stable income with it, which might take years. His uncle, who was an imam and the president of the mosque in Brescia, was infuriated as this was not a dignified life style for his future son-in-law. *“So, I saw it as a way out – they didn't like it at all, so I needed to continue, needed to stay strong and never give up”*. He broke off the engagement when he was 27. He says that it wasn't easy – all of his family waited for a huge wedding that didn't happen. He also remembers that some of the family members, who figured out his sexual orientation, were suggesting him: *“Do whatever you want outside of your home, but get married first and make a baby, so that your wife is occupied”*.

When he broke off the engagement, his parents decided to move back to Pakistan with their three younger children. He says that they didn't want to *“destroy them, like it happened to Abbas”*. They see his homosexuality as a *“disease from the West”* which he picked up in Italy and that can be transferred to other children, because they will follow his example.

At that time Abbas already got involved with different NGOs in Italy, learned more about LGBTQI+ rights, and started working with Amnesty International. It helped him gain even more confidence and to come out at the age of 29 via Facebook – by publishing a photo of his birthday

cake with the words “I’m gay” written on the top. He wasn’t planning on doing it, because when he was no longer obliged to get married, he felt free enough even without a coming out. But as he was working more and more with human rights organisations, he wanted to contribute more to the cause and use his story to empower others. *“This was the first step. And now I have my association, a book deal, a movie”*.

Now he lost almost all contacts with his parents. He says that in his opinion, his life would’ve been much easier if he did get married his cousin. He could’ve stayed with his family, for example. *“But I used my brain and realised that a marriage is not an arrangement for a day or two. It was for life”*. He says that through self-discovery and work with human rights organisations he realised: *“No, I’m not made for my family, or they are not made for me. I tried to explain them many times what I want my life to be, what I want for my future, what I want as my job, but they never took me seriously. Especially my father. He always thought that I just have to submit to his will and “be good” – which for him is working, gaining money, going to the mosque”*.

He says that he feels let down by his parents, because they never actually tried to understand him or take his opinion into consideration. Their decision to force him into an arranged marriage he sees as a very violent one – *“it happened only because of their pride, because they wanted to be good Muslims, because they wanted to go to paradise”*. Now, as he is a well-known activist, a movie director, a founder of “Allah Loves Equality” – an initiative that brings light to the existence of Muslim LGBTs and helps them in their struggles, – he says that he managed to convince people from all over the world, but not his parents. So, he admits that he eventually gave up on trying to improve his relationships with them: *“I have done everything I could’ve done. I don’t know what else to do. Now they have their own life and I have my own life”*. He feels sad to have lost his family almost completely, but at the same time says that he cannot spend all his life trying to change his parents’ mind.

His whole communication with them now is reduced to rare phone calls with his mother which never bring him any comfort. After the creation of “Allah Loves Equality” she calls him to say that every time she prays, she puts his photo under her prayer rug to pray for his sins and that she hopes that one day he will leave his *“Islam of transgenders”* and return to *“real Islam”*. *“Last time I told her: “Mom, I spit on your Islam and prefer to continue developing the one for transgenders”*.



At the same time, he also cut off most of the contacts with the Pakistani community in Italy, apart from his siblings and one or two friends. He feels like it was necessary in these conditions and he doesn't regret his decision.

At the time of the interview his sister was 29 years old and was the only one who stayed in Italy, when the family moved back to Pakistan. At that time, she already had her own family and her marriage was arranged by their parents.

His younger brother was 21. He went with the family back to Pakistan, got married there and later came back to Italy to open his own shop. *"He is a businessman, like our father"*. His marriage was also arranged by their parents. Abbas says that his brother now took his place as the oldest son in the family and became the person their parents consult with before any big decision.

The youngest son was 16, and the youngest sister was 15. They, as was stated before, were taken back to Pakistan to finish their school education there. Abbas says that, no matter what happened between him and his parents, he was very worried for *"the little ones"* as for them moving to Pakistan was *"a horrible experience"*. They were very young when they moved to Italy and grew up there, so eventually became G1.5 in their own country of origin. Abbas remembers that he and his brother were sending them packs of pasta and other Italian products, as they were refusing to eat Pakistani food. According to him, they suffered for 2-3 years, but finally managed to adapt. The private schools their parents opted for also played a big part in the process of their adaptation – Abbas says that if they were going to public Pakistani schools, it would've been much more difficult for them.

At the time of the interview the youngest brother was already accepted to a British university to study medicine, and the youngest sister was getting very good marks in school and preparing to apply to a European university as well.

Abbas maintained good relationships with his siblings, especially the ones who live in Italy. He says that he loves them and wishes them well, but his parents *"put it in their heads"* that Abbas is not a good, right person. Hence, even though they communicate and can sometimes joke about Abbas being gay, he feels uneasy and chooses to keep his distance with them. He says that he is trying to focus on his own emotional well-being, work on his projects, write his book and not to be scared of more proposals of an arranged marriage coming his way. *"I keep my distance because I know that in the end I will have to suffer again"*.

He feels very lucky and very proud of himself for everything he managed to accomplish. *“I was very lucky, thank God! But my God, not the one my mom prays to. I’m very proud of myself – if I stayed at home, continued to be a perfect son, now I probably would’ve been married and have children, and would be going out at night to find guys just to have sex. It would’ve been a horrible, horrible life, the worst one possible! Sometimes I imagine this – pretending to be perfect in front of my family, in front of my wife, pretending to pray... The worst destiny ever”*. He says that he was led to freedom by the fear of marrying a girl and have to pretend all of his life.

Abbas says that his story is not uncommon amongst Pakistani G1.5 in Italy – both gay and not.

In his experience many young Pakistani G1.5 suffer from family pressure to be a “*perfect*” son or daughter, forced to spend all of their free time in a mosque studying Quran by their parents’ demand, forced into arranged marriages. *“So many youngsters suffered and still suffer because their parents compete with others in raising the best and the most religious child. It is destroying the lives of so many young Pakistani people. They are so confused and don’t know who they are”*.

In his opinion, young men from Pakistani G1.5 in Italy have no choice and no control over their lives, meaning that they cannot chose whom to marry or whether to be religious or even a believer at all or no. Their lives are already decided for them – where they will study, where they will work, whom there are going to marry.

The same goes for Pakistani girls, except that they are not expected to study. He remembers that at the time when he just moved Brescia, there were quite a few Pakistani girls from G1.5 who were always coming to school only in traditional dresses. He says that none of those girls studied after the high school, as it is still considered unimportant for women to study and pursue a higher education. They are expected to get married to Pakistani men, who will come to Italy to work and provide for the family. *“The mentality of Pakistani moms in Europe is: “Why would the girls need to study? They will stay at home anyways”*. And even more, they think that it is better for girls not to study, because if they do, they will have to work eventually. And working for a woman is still seen as a horrible misfortune”.

He also feels like, even though many young G1.5 moved to Italy at a much younger age than him and, in his opinion, have a better start in life (speak better Italian, adapt to the new culture better), due to the limited mentality have a very vague view of who they are and where they live. He says that, for example, he receives many private messages from young Pakistanis with the “*mentality*

*of our parents”*, who shame him for his sexual orientation and ask how he can even protect LGBTQI+ rights. *“And those are the questions you should never ask, if you grew up in Europe! It’s their parents speaking”*.

Due to all of these factors, Abbas sees young Pakistani G1.5 as a group of very confused people, who have no control over their lives and are not allowed to make any important decisions. He says that he feels sorry for all of them, as they all live through the same pressure and violence he lived through.

Firstly, it is the pressure to be religious and *“make parents proud”*. Abbas says that it is the question of pride for many parents and in pursuit of a perfect family with perfect children *“they are ruining those children’s lives”*. He remembers that his parents changed when the family moved to Italy. In Pakistan they didn’t care who was he friends with or what was he doing in his free time. They were not forcing him to read Quran or go to the mosque. *“Here they become more religious, started calling home very often, put a tag on themselves “We are the perfect Pakistanis”*. He also feels like in Pakistan all of the youngsters had more options and freedom regarding marriage.

He sees the roots to the problem in the parents’ mentality. He says that in Italy they are always very scared of the Western influence on their children. Hence, they are pressuring them to be friends only with other young Pakistanis, to dedicate all of their free time with religion etc. so that they will have no opportunity to get familiar with the Italian culture or get Italian friends. *“Maybe it’s because the major part of them comes to Italy from small towns in Pakistan. So, it’s not just Pakistani mentality, it’s a Pakistani mentality of a very low class. People who come from Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore – they are different”*.

Secondly, it is the culture of arranged and often forced marriages. According to Abbas, it is impossible to marry a non-Pakistani, unless you are marrying someone in order to get Italian documents. *“Only in this case everyone will support you”*. It is also impossible to marry a person of a Pakistani origin who wasn’t selected by parents.

He told me a story of his friend, who chose to marry a Pakistani girl he met on social media. His father, brothers and a step-mother didn’t approve of the marriage, as it wasn’t arranged by them and because it was *“a love story”*, which is frowned upon. Eventually they got married without his parents’ blessing and since then lost all contact with his family. At the time of the interview he

had two children and a very happy marriage, but his father wasn't speaking to him and never saw his grandchildren.

Thirdly, it's the fact that being LGBTQI+ is still a complete taboo, ignored by the community. Abbas says that for the long time he was thinking that he was the only gay person amongst the whole Pakistani community. But after he came out, started writing articles, created "Allah Loves Equality" and became visible as both Pakistani and gay, he was privately contacted by 7-8 gay Pakistani guys from G1.5. They were very confused and didn't know what to do with their lives, because they all were approaching the age of 26, when they are expected to get married. One of them was waiting for his parents to find him a wife. Others were already engaged, one of them to his cousin, like Abbas was. They wrote him that his story gave them courage, were asking for help, suggestions, contact. Abbas told me that for each one of these guys who were brave enough to write him there are hundreds of those who weren't and that he sees this as one of the biggest problems in his community.

The fourth type of violence Abbas sees in the practice of sending young people back to Pakistan, as it happened to his younger siblings. He says that it is a very wide-spread practice. His parents, like many other Pakistani families, initially had a plan to send their kids back to Pakistan much earlier, after they will get their residence permits. He says that this happens a lot in Pakistani community in Italy, as the parents fear the host society, the Italian culture and its influence on their children and don't want to see them "ruined".

Hence, the youngsters, after working hard on their integration into Italian society, after 2-3years find themselves back in Pakistan with the idea, that one day they will go back to Italy again. Because of this uncertainty about where they home and their future is, they often don't take their studies seriously and don't aim for anything higher than going back to Italy in 4-5 years and working as a taxi driver or a factory worker. In Abbas's experience, most of them are not motivated to study also because of their parents' ideas for their future – they are constantly told that they will go back to Italy, so it doesn't matter what they do in Pakistan, whether they study or not. His siblings, on the other hand, have plans to study in Europe and later build a career back in Pakistan, and because of this they achieved academic success. But, in his experience, it doesn't happen often.

In Abbas's opinion, the fact of migration elevates the level of all types of violence in Pakistani community in Italy. "When you move to another country, you need to adapt to a new culture. And

*we, on the contrary, are trying to stay as much Pakistani as possible. In Pakistan you don't need to prove that you are a Pakistani. And here...*" In his opinion, most of the situations of violence that he and people he knows lived through in Italy, would've never happened if their families stayed in Pakistan.

Abbas feels like the only way for G1.5 in his community to change their situation is through education. Apart from the need for educational and integration programmes, the major role is also played by self-education and the willingness of G1.5 to change their life situation. He says that first and foremost they have to *"open their eyes and their brains"* to see that what is happening to them is violence. Now, he thinks, they grow up to accept forced and/or arranged marriages, pressure, threats etc. as a norm and don't know that they have a right to choose anything on their own.

He is planning to continue his work on educational and human rights movements. Currently the initiative "Allah Loves Equality", started as a hashtag on Facebook and aimed at supporting Muslim LGBTQI+, has around 6000 followers on Facebook and more than 2000 followers on Instagram. It became the inspiration behind the "Allah Loves Equality" book that Abbas wrote together with Elena De Piccoli and Michele Benini. It was published by TAM in 2018 and currently is sold by Feltrinelli. "Allah Loves Equality" also became a 2017 documentary movie, written and directed by Abbas, in which he discovers the life of LGBTQI+ community in Pakistan. He hopes that it will grow into a series of documentaries about LGBTQI+ activists in different countries. He is also one of a group of about 20 gay bloggers that registered one of the biggest gay blogs Il Grande Colibri as a cultural association in early 2017.

## Alim

*“I think he knew that it was against the law, but he didn’t expect that I will ever report him”*

**Gender:** male

**Age at the time of the interview:** 25

**Origins/place of birth:** Sylhet, Bangladesh

**Migrated in: 2000 at the age of:** 7

**Currently lives:** Palermo, Italy

**Marital status:** single

**Current employment status:** student, cultural mediator, translator

**Date and location of the interview:** 05.04.2018, Palermo, Italy (Moltivolti)

Alim was born in Bangladesh and arrived in Italy at the age of 7, together with his uncle’s family. His uncle was living in Italy since 1992, while his family was staying in Bangladesh. In 2000 he went back there to organise their move to Palermo. Alim came to Italy with them.

He told me that the decision to migrate wasn’t his, but his parents’. Alim’s parents wanted a better future for him, hence they decided to send him to Italy with his aunt and uncle. They themselves stayed in Bangladesh, where they live till now.

His aunt and uncle brought him to Italy as their son, hence on forged documents. They started preparing everything about one year before and Alim remembers going to Dhaka with his aunt and another uncle on numerous occasions. He says that during those trips that lasted for 4-7 days he was missing his family a lot and already knew that this is just the beginning, as he was supposed to leave for good soon. *“Once they were discussing whether I should go to Dhaka with my aunt again or they will manage without me. I was listening to them and started crying. They thought that I wanted to go with her. But I was crying because my time to leave Bangladesh was approaching”*.

Alim remembers that before the trip everyone had a lot of anxiety that something will go wrong and they will get arrested. However, they managed to arrive in Italy without any problems.

He remembers that when he just arrived in Rome, he was very surprised by the number of light-skinned people, escalators in the airport and by the silence on the streets. *“In Bangladesh it’s always so noisy, that I noticed the difference straight ahead”*. He was very surprised by the cold, and in April in Bangladesh was already very hot. *“My uncle took off his coat and put it on me. It was a very sweet gesture”*.

Two days after arriving in Italy they reached Palermo, where his uncle was living before making a reunification for his family. He was renting a small apartment in the city centre, and this was Alim’s first home in Italy.

Alim says that he was a very active and disobedient child back home in Bangladesh, but the trip from Dhaka to Palermo changed him completely. He told me that it was like he became a complete opposite of himself. Before he left home, his father told him to behave well at his aunt’s and uncle’s house and not to make them angry. So, he was trying very hard to be good. His uncle and aunt had a daughter of their own, and for many years Alim was living with them as their son. *“At that time, we were one family”*.

He remembers that back home in Bangladesh he was living in a private house in a village and was outside all day, running around with his friends and adventuring the neighbourhoods. In his own words, that life in a countryside was wonderful. However, after moving to Palermo he had to live in a small apartment on the third floor in the city centre. *“I got into a habit of speaking mostly to my aunt, as I had no friends. She was also taking it all very hard and was crying all the time, because here she was all alone, without her family”*.

Alim’s uncle was trying to make the period of adaptation more interesting for them, so when he was free, he was taking his wife, daughter and nephew to see the city. Alim says that at those times they all were so happy to meet at least someone from Bangladesh, that when it was happening, they were inviting them for dinner, even complete strangers. Bangladeshi community in Palermo was very small at that time, and most of them were feeling nostalgic and lost.

At that time there was only one Bangladeshi call centre in Palermo and Alim remembers going there with his aunt and uncle once every two-three weeks to call back home, to Bangladesh. His parents had no phone at home and had to also go to a call centre to receive their calls.

In his free time Alim was going down to the street to play football. *“In the beginning I was literally playing with the wall, because there as no one who would play with me”*. Even though he made

friends with Italian boys who were living downstairs, he couldn't join them, as they going to play football to other parts of the city. So, for some time his was alone. *"Two months later, in June, one more Bangladeshi boy of my age moved to our street and we became best friends. We were always or at home, talking, or playing on the street. Now he lives in England, but we are still in contact. When I will get my citizenship, I will go to visit him"*.

For about six months since his arrival in Italy (from April to September) Alim was staying at home, with his aunt and little cousin. In September of 2000 he, however, started going to an Italian elementary school, together with his best friend. *"For two years we were going to school together, but then he had to move back to Bangladesh for one year – his parents wanted him to learn how to read and write Bengali, so that he won't lose his origins"*. Alim at that time had to get used to being alone again. When his friend came back one year later, they already had a year of difference and were not in the same class at school.

In that same school he also met Dilana – they were studying together for the total of 5 years *"After school we've lost touch, and years later I've met her again at the university. I wasn't sure if it was her, because 10 years have passed, so she asked me first: "Are you Alim?" I was very happy to see her!"*. In general, they were two out of about 5-6 foreigner students at that school. In their class they were four – Alim, his friend from Bangladesh, Dilana and a girl from Mauritius. Alim says that they all were very well integrated and didn't feel different at all.

In general, Alim described his experience at the elementary school as a positive and a pleasant one. *"I also liked it because this way I got to spend some time outside of home"*. He says that his teachers always liked him and helped him. He was two years older than his classmates – he had done two years of school in Bangladesh, but in Italy had to start everything from the beginning, as he couldn't speak Italian. *"However, even later no one thought about helping me skip two classes – I just continued this way and lost two years"*.

But nevertheless, Alim feels like this school was better than others – they had good teachers, had progressive ideas, were taking them out for lessons. *"They were very nice. They were giving us a book to read, then were explaining us everything that we didn't manage to understand and then were also taking us out to see a movie version, for example"*. He says that he was enjoying that approach a lot.



After some time, he started helping his uncle and aunt with their documents and paperwork, as he was speaking Italian better than them. *“He arrived 8 years before me, but till this day his Italian is very limited”*.

His uncle was cleaning apartments for living, and his aunt was a stay at home mother, who, in Alim’s words, was taking care of all of them. In the years following Alim’s arrival in Palermo, they had four more children – one son and three daughters, one of which was born after he left the house. With the family growing so fast, the uncle needed more money. However, at the same time he started having problems with his income. He was losing clients due to them moving away from Palermo or being unable to afford his services anymore.

At that point Alim had to start working too, when he was as young as 9-10. He started selling roses and sometimes small merchandise in bars and on the streets, and in one night was visiting all of the busiest places in Palermo city centre. He says that at that time he met all types of people, as to sell more he was going to all sorts of places, from cheap bars to expensive restaurants. *“Sometimes I was coming to a restaurant to sell flowers and seeing my school teachers there”*. In other cases, he was seeing many drunk people, people taking drugs and in general, in his words, many things that a child of that age should never see. *“We never had even one day off. Still, I don’t feel like it was a difficult job. But it was a job”*.

Out of the money he was earning, he had to pay a sum to his uncle. *“He told me that I was living in his house, eating his food, so I had to give him 225 euro every month”*.

He says that at first, he was very happy to help his uncle, as he felt like they were all one big family. With his first earned money he was buying dresses for his little cousins. *“But then everything changed because of the money. It got ugly”*.

In 2005 the whole family went back to Bangladesh to visit Alim’s parents and other relatives. This was the first time when he saw in which conditions his family and especially his father lived. *“It was very bad. And I gave him all the money that I had saved from selling roses”*.

However, when they came back to Palermo in 2006, his uncle told him that he cannot send all his money to his parents. At that point, Alim remembers, 225 euro a month were already not enough for his uncle. He wanted to receive everything that Alim was earning. *“I told him – no, I will not give you everything, I need to help my family. At that time, I was at risk of losing my father, because*

*he was very sick*". Alim decided to hold his ground and to continue to give his uncle only the 225 euro to cover his living costs.

At the same time, Alim started the middle school close to his home. In his words, he very soon realised that he had made a mistake by choosing this exact one. *"The students there were from very marginalised neighbourhood and background. They were calling us "Turks" or "blacks", were always trying to stay away from us... Those who really adapted to their ways, became their friends. Who didn't, remained isolated"*.

Alim says that for him, however, the biggest problem was the lack of studying. In his opinion, it wasn't as much teachers' fault, as it was students'. *"If a teacher was writing a note to their parents, they were just shrugging: "Do you really think someone will read this?". If they were suspended, they were just happy that they got three days off school"*. He says that there were many teachers who were not managing to do his job, but, on the other hand, this was the place when he met one of the best teachers in his life. Hence, he had mixed feelings about that school.

At that point Alim was continuing to have constant conflicts with his uncle, that were growing more and more serious. He remembers that he was trying not to be at home at the same time with his uncle, because at any moment he could've start to blame him, extort money etc. Eventually, Alim was just trying to come home as rarely as it was possible. He was staying out late selling roses and coming back after 2 a.m., when he was sure that his uncle was already sleeping. *"My aunt was a bit better. But my uncle... He was treating me badly, beating me from time to time, screaming... At one point I was just forced to report him and leave that house"*.

That one point arrived, when Alim's uncle closed him at home and wasn't letting him to out. During the interview Alim called that situation *"breaching the limits"* numerous times. He says that after this he couldn't stay quiet anymore.

He received help with reporting domestic violence. First person that helped him was a teacher in his school, who was also a friend of the family. The second one was Alim's second uncle, the brother of the uncle he was living with. At that time, he didn't have his papers in order and couldn't neither report his brother himself, nor take Alim to live with him officially. So, they both called the police to protect Alim from the beatings he was receiving.

When the police came, Alim's uncle was begging him not to say anything and was promising that he will treat him well in the future. *"And I asked him: "So I should protect you and put people*

*who helped me in difficult position? Tell to police that they were lying?” And when police came, I told them the truth”.*

Hence, at that point policemen helped him leave his uncle’s house and move into a community house for young victims of domestic violence at Termini Imerese (a town on the northern coast of Sicily, 33 km away from Palermo). At that time Alim was 13 years old.

Regarding his uncle’s behaviour, Alim says that he most probably was aware of the fact that it was illegal to force a child to work, extort money from him and also to use physical violence as a discipline and extortion measure. *“I think he knew that it was against the law, but he didn’t expect that I will ever report him”.*

Alim says that he wished his uncle all the best, because he and his wife gave him an opportunity to build his life in Italy. But, on the other hand, from a very young age he was feeling responsible for his parents back in Bangladesh. *“My uncle was able to live with his family here. But my family was waiting for me to send them money. Yes, I was very young, but I was also very mature. I felt the responsibility”.*

Alim spent around 2 years in the centre for DV victims and was the only foreigner there for about a year, until two boys from Morocco and Gambia arrived. This was also where he finished the middle school. He describes his stay there as *“very nice”*. He enjoyed the school there more, as, in his opinion, it was *“more serious and more organised”*, and started studying better than before. Students were also involved in numerous extracurricular activities, such as theatre, journalism, different types of sports etc. *“Last week I actually went back to Termini Imerese to see that school. It was Easter, so the school was closed. I took a photo of it and remembered the good times I had there”*. He says that this was the place where he realised that it is important to surround yourself with people who bring you up, and that at that time he was striving also because of the group he was in.

However, all the time Alim was living in Termini Imerese, he was missing Palermo and wanted to be transferred there eventually. He wasn’t in contact with his uncle and aunt, with whom he lived before, but his other uncle, who helped him make a claim to the police, was visiting him on weekends. *“I had the courage to report the violence I was suffering only thanks to my second uncle. If it wasn’t for him, I wouldn’t have managed”*. While Alim was in the community house

and wasn't able to work to help his family, his other uncle was sending them money from time to time.

With the help of social workers and psychologists of the centre, Alim's case went to the juvenile court and his uncle was granted a residence permit to take care of him, as his relative. So, at that time Alim was able to move back to Palermo, stay with him and got accepted to the high school with the technical specialisation there.

However, when Alim turned 18 and wasn't a minor anymore, his uncle lost his right to a residence permit and remained undocumented until the new amnesty for undocumented migrants in 2012. *"I was very happy when he got documents because of me. And I was very sad when he lost them again"*. Alim lived with this uncle for other 5-6 years, until he was accepted to the university and changed the house.

At the time of the interview, on April 5, 2018, Alim was a student of a bachelor programme in Civil Engineering and was also working both as a secretary in a laboratory and as a cultural mediator with the Immigration office. For many years he is very active in civil society, collaborating with NGOs on integrational projects for young migrants.

He lives independently, renting a place together with his other Bangladeshi friends in Palermo. He is the only one of them who chose to study after the high school.

Regarding his identity, Alim told me that, as he is living in Italy for the past 18 years, learned the language, culture, arts and history of Italy, he feels like he is both Bangladeshi and Italian.

After 18 years of living in Italy he finally got an opportunity to apply for a citizenship, as even those who arrive as children have to show their income for three consecutive years in order to qualify. At that point was waiting for the approval of his application. *"They told me it will take two years, so I have to wait. I arrived here when I was 7, I studied in an Italian school, I know all about Italian culture, traditions and language. And still I had to wait 18 years to qualify!"*. He gave me an example of his cousins – the one who was 1 year old when she moved to Italy and still doesn't have a citizenship and her brother who was born one year later in Italy and got his citizenship following a simplified procedure.

From time to time Alim goes back to Bangladesh to visit his parents. He says that it's quite difficult to arrange, as he needs to find a right time and a significant amount of money for the travel.

His aunt and uncle have moved to Great Britain. Alim is not in contact with them since the time he had reported them. However, as they are still relatives, he receives some news about them from his family in Bangladesh.

Alim feels like what had happened to him in Italy probably wouldn't have happened to him back in Bangladesh. He says that everything depends on the family, but in his experience most of the families there are doing everything they can to make their children study and achieve more in the future. On the other hand, because of economic conditions older children in a family often have to start working as soon as possible.

When I asked him whether he attests his experience of DV to the fact that they were a migrant family, he told me: *"Absolutely. I have never seen an Italian child selling roses on the street"*. He says that it all happened because of his vulnerable position in his uncle's family and also because of the migrant conditions, mainly economic difficulties and cultural specificities. *"You feel like you have to help your parents. Even if you are still a child"*.

However, he told me that he also cherishes this part of his past as a very formative experience. *"Of course, I don't want this life for my kids. But this was my way to myself and to my potential"*.

Regarding Bangladeshi G1.5 in Italy, Alim told me that due to the experience of migration overall, they are much more mature than their Italian peers. In his opinion, what have happened to him is not a unique case and is happening to many youngsters in the Bangladeshi community. Many of his peers also came to Italy with their relatives or family friends and are forced to earn money and pay for their accommodation from a very young age.

Many of them have the same job as Alim had – they sell roses or small merchandise, such as lighters in busy bars and restaurants. Hence, they are exposed to alcohol and drugs from a very young age. Alim says that due to the fact that most of them are Muslims and are not allowed to drink or take drugs, they usually don't pick up the unhealthy habits. *"But not all of us are mature and self-aware. Some of the boys are just letting themselves go and get addicted to alcohol or drugs"*.

Domestic violence, in his opinion, is very normalized inside the community as a disciplinary measure in many forms, starting from humiliation and ending in physical violence with serious outcomes.

Hence, many of the Bangladeshi 1.5, who grew up in the same family conditions as Alim, later also ended up in a community house for victims of domestic violence or were hosted by Italian families. Alim says that he lost contact with the majority of them as they changed their phone numbers and other contact information in order to be protected from their parents or other relatives. Alim sees the solution in the change of integrational policies. Apart from language and integration courses and more attention to migrant families, he feels like in the case of Bangladeshi families, a certain financial support from the government for every minor in the family can help. It should be cancelled if a child is seen working and the family should be looked into by the social services. Alim told me that in his opinion it can work, because the main conditions for child labour and domestic violence are poverty, lack of control and the G1.5 children's invisibility in Italy.

## 3.2 Results of interviews with experts

### Michaela Arcari

Social worker

Turin, Italy

Michaela is living in Turin and working as a social worker in a hospital, assisting in cases when the people who arrive in the emergency room show signs of domestic violence. She is also working in schools, conducting workshops on hidden violence.

Micaela told me that in her experience she saw many migrant women from Romania, Peru and Moldova, who arrived in Italy with G1.5 children. Some of them arrived before or together with their husbands, others married Italian men before or after migration. Overall, Michaela told me that the majority of migrant women who she assisted are much more resistant to the idea of a divorce or of reporting domestic violence than Italian women.

One of the main reasons is religion. She described two cases of Romanian families where the mother, even though both she and her children were suffering from violence from the part of the husband, were reluctant to leave the abusive relationship due to their religious beliefs and patriarchal nature of their church. *“One of them is my very close friend. She is very religious and listens only to her Orthodox priest, unfortunately... You know, all that stuff about carrying your own cross and respecting the husband. This can really hurt people who are already in a fragile state”*.

Michaela also told me that women from very religious families, who eventually decide to leave the abuser and/or report him, often hide it from their families as they feel like they will be judged by parents or by the community.

In her field of work in hospitals she doesn't see many youngsters, but she works with them during the workshops in schools, hence in some cases she becomes a sort of a confidant from the side, with whom youngsters from G1.5 can speak about the abuse they experience more freely.

Regarding G1.5 Michaela told me that she sees many cases of successful integration, but they, unfortunately, are heavily influenced by the questions of race, religion and overall appearance. *“It is much easier to integrate a blond girl with blue or green eyes, than a black girl. Or a Roma girl, or a girl wearing a hijab”*. Hence, many representatives of G1.5 remain isolated and have no one to speak to and to confide in.

Michaela stated, that in many cases school staff are not prepared to deal with students with the migration background and especially with those who experience violence at home.

The case she wanted to specifically describe to me, happened in one of Turin schools during the workshop on hidden violence in relationship. Michaela saw that one of the students went out of the class room in tears and followed her to the bathroom, where she found her crying. The girl was G1.5 from Morocco and was about 15-16 years old. As far as Michaela remembers, she arrived in Italy when she was about 10-11 years old.

When they started talking, the girl told Michaela that her father is a very violent man and beats her mother on the regular basis. At that time, he was beginning to get violent also with her. She was also forbidden to go out of the house by herself and was allowed to go only to school. When her father was away, she was treated the same way by her older brother, who at that time *was “the man in the family”*. *“They were treating her in a way that she couldn’t take anymore. She told me that she just wanted to be a little bit freer, like her Italian classmates. When she was talking to me, it seemed like she was made of stone...”*

The girl told Michaela that at one point, when things got especially difficult for her, she went to speak to the school psychologist, who listened to her and started crying herself. *“I still feel devastated for this young girl, who found strength and courage to go and ask for help, but didn’t find adults that were capable to help her. The psychologist, who was obviously not qualified for the job, her mother, who was a victim of physical violence and was still constantly telling her: “Be good, behave yourself, listen to your father!”, her older brother”*.

During the conversation, the girl told Michaela also that she is planning to run away from home in the following weeks and had no intentions of finishing school, because she couldn’t take it anymore. At that point Michaela, not being able to interfere in any other way due to not being a part of the school staff, had an appointment with the principal. During that appointment the principal was informed about the fact that one of the school’s students was experiencing domestic



violence at home. The principal assured Michaela that all the needed measures will be taken and the social services will be informed.

Overall, Michaela told me that, in her opinion, the violence against G1.5 representatives is quite invisible, as many migrant families and communities are not fully integrated into the life of the society. Hence, the children and youngsters are visible exclusively in schools, where those of them who suffer from DV, usually are trying to hide the difficulties that they experience at home or see what is happening to them as a part of the norm (due to violence being too normalized in their cultures of origin). In other cases, Michaela says, they become visible to social workers only “*when something bad had already happened to them*”.

## **Klevisa Ruci**

Civil Service volunteer at Centro Studi Sereno Regis, participant of No Hate movement

Turin, Italy

Klevisa was born in Albania in a Muslim family and came to Italy when she was 18 years old to attend the University of Turin. Hence, she has an experience very close the one of G1.25.

She was very willing to give me an interview as she feels very passionate about creating a school environment, based on equality. She told me that, even though she doesn't work with the victims of domestic violence, she sees a lot of inequality and unfair treatment of school students with migrant background lately. Hence, she doesn't believe that a G1.5 or G2.0 student, who is experiencing abuse at home, can get the same level of attention from the school staff as an Italian student with the same problem.

Klevisa is working as a Civil Service volunteer at Centro Sereno Regis, which is the centre for research, education and action for peace, environment and sustainability, based in Turin. Her main occupation are the workshops in the frame work of No Hate Speech movement (the Council of Europe's youth campaign focused on mobilising young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online). *"We start with peer education courses – a training for the school children who we chose. Then we go with them to the schools and make courses based on non-formal education. There's also a collaboration between school - the guys from one school go to another one as trainers. We believe that peer education is very important to teach human rights"*.

The situation that Klevisa wanted to tell me about happened a few months before our interview in a small town in Piedmont. That day she was working in a school and had 5 different workshops in 5 classes with the presence and participation of teachers. The workshops were focused on discussions about the right to a citizenship and Jus Soli.

The third workshop was in a class where there were 4 15-16 years old students from Morocco. *"The teacher who was supposed to conduct the workshop with me all of a sudden started an absolutely racist monologue about refugees that receive 35 euro per day, about terrorists, Muslims "who bring their religion into our country"! Can you imagine?"*

Klevisa was outraged, as the workshop was about fighting about hate speech and discrimination, and that town was chosen as a quite *“closed and racist one”*.

Before Klevisa managed to stop her, the other students started insulting one of the Moroccan students. *“And the teacher was so happy! She told him: “I’m a woman! In your country I am not allowed to walk on the street without a hijab!”. He tried to protest, told her that he was back in his country a few months ago and that there are many Christian churches in Morocco. She was screaming: “It’s not true, you are lying!” at him”*.

Eventually Klevisa made it very clear to the teacher that at that point she is not going to participate in the workshop and either has to sit down and calm down or can go out of the class, but that later she is making a formal complaint to the school principal. The teacher got offended and left the auditorium.

Klevisa says that after that she had a very successful discussion with the students about what is the right to the citizenship, what is Jus Soli, who is entitled to be a citizen etc. However, she says that the problem is that these students saw her once and will never see her again. And that teacher continues to work in the school and they see every day. She doesn’t believe there were any repercussion even though the school knows for a fact that she is a racist.

This was one of the many cases that Klevisa experienced during the project. In her opinion there are way too many teachers who are thinking the same way as that one, but maybe are not as direct. She says that accepting this as a fact is the first step towards resolving this problem. *“They already exist and we cannot fire all of them, as it will only worsen the situation with the racism all over Italy”*.

But the second one, she says, should be mandatory trainings for these teachers. *“I was speaking about the right to a citizenship for people born in Italy, not about refugees, not about Islam, not about youngsters who came to Italy a few years ago! And she didn’t even understand the difference!”*

Klevisa says that even though she saw and personally experienced a lot of discrimination, but this was the one time when she left a school in tears. *“Not because I’m also Muslim, but because I cannot even imagine how horrible it must be for 16-year old foreign students to go to that school every day and receive so much hate...”*

## Flor Vidaurre

cultural mediator working with asylum seekers

Turin, Italy

Flor is originally from Peru, but lives in Turin for the past 30 years. She previously worked in the association called Alma Terra, that works mostly with migrant women (namely from Peru, Ecuador, Philippines, Romania), who are coming to Italy alone, sometimes pregnant. In the last years she is working mostly with asylum seekers.

Overall, regarding the particularities of Peruvian migration, Flor's experience is very similar to the one that was described by Margot, as they also worked together a lot.

However, she also told me many interesting details regarding Peruvian G1.5 in Italy.

In her opinion, the relationship between children and their parents became difficult also because of the fact, that while a mother is working in Italy, sending money back home and organizing a family reunification (that can take up to 3-4 years), their families are living a much better life than before due to the difference in prices. Hence, many of the children and youngsters are going to private schools back in Peru and can afford much more. *"100 euro in Turin and 100 euro in Lima are different amounts of money. If your mother is working in Europe, you all of a sudden can live quite comfortably"*. After the move, however, they cannot live the same lifestyle anymore.

The second factor, that makes the relationships between parents and children more difficult is the age. Flor thinks, that at the age of 15-17 years old, when youngsters, after a few years without one or both parents, are usually ready to leave home and learn to live on their own (for example, starting their studies in a university), they are brought to Italy to re-meet their parents and become sons and daughters again.

The third one is the separation from the people who were taking care of them while their mother or both parents were away. Flor says that she saw many families in Peruvian community in Piedmont that had *"many serious problems with their sons, very serious!"*. In her opinion, at that point family need to put all the resources and attention towards resolving these issues, otherwise youngsters often chose the wrong path and some of them become criminals. *"There are neighbourhoods of Turin, like San Paolo, where there were many problems with young Peruvians,*

*who were very angry and gave up on everything – families, studies... We were making projects to give them at least some support and alternative”.*

In Flor’s opinion, these three factors are very important. *“When they are coming to Italy from Peru, where they lately had a very high quality of life, to Italy, where the money in their family are tight, no one knows them and the parents are having troubles with their roles in the family... It creates chaos”.*

One of other factors that are important, in Flor’s opinion, is the integration of the first generation. She told me that she sees a direct connection between the level of their integration, and the one of G1.5 and G2.0.

Flor, as well as Margot, feels like the problem of Peruvian community is that the violence is not seeing as a violence – neither inside a family, not outside of it. She has met many people who were suffering violence at their work as care givers, kitchen workers etc., both men and women. *“As many of them don’t see violence as the reason to quit a job or report their employers, for women it never becomes a valid reason to leave an abusive marriage as well. And for some men the violence they suffer at work becomes one more reason to be violent at home”.*

In Flor’s opinion, the biggest reason for not reporting violence for Peruvian women is economic problems – they are afraid that they will not manage to live autonomously, especially if they have children.

Another type of domestic violence regarding G1.5 that Flor wanted to talk about was based on the series of interviews that she had conducted during the project *“La casa dov’è?”* (Where is the house?) together with Alma Teatro. *“There was a girl from Romania – her mother originally told her that she was going to Italy for a touristic trip. She was so angry, so hurt by this betrayal, was telling us that she really doesn’t want to stay here. We might not see it like this, but for her it was real violence”.*

She also feels like Peruvians don’t see some of the forms of physical violence, like slaps or pushing, used to discipline children, as violence at all. Hence, when Peruvian families are coming to Italy, they need to learn not to do this *“at least in public”.*

## Le Onde staff

### **Anna Immordino**

Psychologist at Le Onde

### **Manuela Emme**

Psychologist at Le Onde

### **Mara Cortimiglia**

Reception manager at Le Onde

Palermo, Italy

Le Onde is a centre against violence against women that operates in Palermo since 1992. It provides legal and psychological consulting to women who suffer from violence, as well as protective housing. Le Onde was the organisation that hosted Amalie for the 1,5 years when she decided to leave her partner.

Due to the employees' tight schedule, we had to register a group interview with two of the centre's psychologist and the reception manager.

Anna, Manuela and Mara have told me that over the years they have worked with a significant number of cases of DV, in which the victims were migrant women and children. According to them, every year the number of this cases is 8-9 per cent, which equals to 23-31 women out of the total number of those who turn to Le Onde for help. However, when it comes to protective housing, 50% of women there have a migration background and have children. Amongst them half of the women have Italian partners and another half are married also to foreigners. The countries of origin of these women in most cases are Romania, Mauritius, Tunisia, Sri Lanka, Dominican Republic, Morocco, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Bangladesh and Cape Verde.

All three agreed on the fact that working with migrant families is significantly more difficult due to the language barrier and difficulties with finding a reliable interpreter. Mara told me that many women are very reluctant to speak in front of anyone who is coming from the same community as them. *“They are scared that an interpreter will have the same views or values that the abuser has. Also, the smaller the community, the more scared they are – there is a very big chance that an*

*interpreter will know their relatives*". They told me that in many cases female interpreters from the same community and cultural background as victims can have a different vision of a practice, hence they can even change the terminology while interpreting – for example, translate “*arranged marriage*” instead of “*forced marriage*”.

The same goes for the cases in which minors are involved. “*The father, even if there is a suspicion regarding domestic violence or sexual abuse, has a right to see his children, - told me Anna Immordino. - Even if these children don't want this. This is a very difficult thing to deal with even when both parents are Italian. But can you imagine a migrant family? Yes, the meeting has to happen in the presence of a social worker or a psychologist. But if both a father and a child speak another language; how will it help?*”

Hence, in the future they really want to have cultural mediators and specialists with different language skills in their staff as this will make their work much easier.

They also commented on the fact, that school staff, especially psychologists, are not prepared for working with migrant students, hence they can overlook many situations of domestic violence regarding G1.5 students. Anna Immordino told me that she had a series of interviews with school psychologists and saw the urgent need for a training. “*One of them told me that is admiring fathers of her Muslim students so much, because they are always the ones who bring children to school and pick them up after classes. And I couldn't agree with her at all, as in my practice if the mother of the family is not visible, in many cases it means that she is discouraged or even forbidden to leave the house and take any responsibility in the new country*”. Hence, she was worried that without a necessary training they will not be able to recognize the signs of abuse and assist the students with the migration background.

The main problem in assisting the G1.5, in their opinion, is the lack of a systemic approach. “*We are the biggest anti-violence centre in Palermo. However, none of the projects we wrote regarding helping youngsters were approved. We don't know who in the end get the funding and how they approach this topic*”.

Anna, Manuela and Mara also gave me more details about Amalie's case as well. They told me that the other big issue in this case was also the fact that her partner in order to punish her didn't renew her residence permit without telling her, which later created many problems for her. In fact,

during her time at the protected house social workers were trying to fix this issue for her, as it could've really help her to find an internship or a job.

The other one was the fact that she really wanted to get married to justify her choice of a partner to her parents. Hence, they feel like this is one of the reasons why at the time of my interview with Amalie she expressed a desire to return to him after leaving the centre, even though her daughters didn't want to even see him.

The last one was the fact that she couldn't see what was happening to her as something that also affected her children. *"We see this a lot in our work. Many women say: "Yes, he was violent with me, but at least he hasn't done anything to the children. So, he is a good father". In these cases, the concept of witnessed violence is very difficult to explain, as they just don't see it as trauma"*.

Hence, in Manuela's opinion, most of the migrant women that turn to Le Onde for help, have a very narrow perception of violence. *"For them it's either physical violence, or being closed at home. Things like creating problems with documents, thankfully, are also seen as violence. But the rest – not that much"*.

All three of them agreed that the fact of migration influences the situation with domestic violence, as it creates new levels of vulnerability and makes women and children less protected (due to the lack of family support, language competences or, in some cases, problems with documents).



## Delfina Nunez

cultural mediator, president of Consulta delle Culture

Palermo, Italy

Delfina was born in Cape Verde and arrived in Italy around 30 years ago. At the time of the interview, she was the president of the Consulta delle Culture of Palermo (the organisation of the foreigners in Palermo). Hence, I asked her for an interview not only as a migrant woman and a community leader, but also as the president of the Consulta.

Delfina told me that she saw many conflicts in the families with G1.5 children, however she has a different view of the situation. She sees one of the roots of conflicts in the difficulties of migration at a young age – the need to learn the language or the necessity to repeat a class or two in order to adapt to the Italian school system. *“They have to adapt. Of course, also the parents need to try, and the society. But it all depends on whether the children want to integrate or no. [...] It’s obvious that if you come here, your life will change. So, either you study or your parents tell you “Go and work!”*”.

She described the unwillingness to adapt as the reason for most conflicts. *“Yes, they forget their parents a bit during 1-2 years when they don’t see each other. And then they arrive here and all the character flaws and defects are coming to the surface. And they don’t want to follow the rules that their mothers set in order to protect them!”*.

She told me that she knows cases in which a mother had to send her children, a son and a daughter, back to their country of origin because *“they didn’t want to accept her rules and it was difficult to live with them”*.

In one of the cases that Delfina told me about, a son who was sent back home by his mother, took it very bad and, as she heard from other people, *“ended up as a homeless bum”*. *“Going back is a failure. When you are here, your mother tells you that she will send you back, and then she sends you back! It happened also in Palermo”*.

According to her, many G1.5 representatives are coming to Europe thinking that *“here they can do whatever they want, there’s luxury and money there!”*, and don’t see their parent’s sacrifices.

Analysing some of the situations that she saw, Delfina also told me that many G1.5, when their parents decide to send them back, *“start with the repressions... You know, all those “Oh, I will kill myself, I will do this and that!”*. They are always trying to make you feel guilty”.

In her opinion, youngsters from migrant families, that don't follow the rules, don't understand that *“everything their parents are telling them is for their own good and for their mothers' peace of mind”*.

Regarding disciplining children with the use of physical methods (slaps etc), Delfina says that she saw many situations in which children from Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan families were taken away from them and placed in centres for minors. *“Children go to school, tell things, and then someone believes them. I know one family with four children, and all of them are in protected housing now. Because here you cannot even slap a child's hand like this!”*

In her opinion, in most of the cases youngsters are exaggerating what had really happened, and teachers listen to them. *“Well, maybe some child was actually slapped, but I was also slapped when I was little and nobody took me away from my parents! Here if you come to school with a scratch, they will ask you what happened, but you can always say that you hurt yourself. But there are many young girls who invent lies...”*

Having said that, she admitted that there are actual cases of domestic violence, many of which are related to father's alcoholism. *“Also, many people live in 1-2 room apartments, have 2-3 children. It's not easy to live like this! Can you imagine?”* She also said that she agrees that in cases where a husband abuses a wife, their children suffer as well.

She feels like the schools are very adapted for migrant children and want them to succeed in life. *“We are so lucky that the teachers are so marvellous! Trust me, there are some kids who arrive in November-December, when the school has already started, and the teachers make them busy with studies and with the language, because this is also a problem. But this way they learn so easily, that even pass the middle school exam and either stop after or continue their studies, do a sort of a training, or find a job. [...] Maybe some of them were even in high school back home and planned to go to a university and find a better job. But when you arrive here, you need to adapt”*. She says that those teachers, whom she sees in Italy, are amazing and are as good as cultural mediators at finding their approach to migrant children. *“The school is opening their doors and helping families to integrate”*.

## **Claudia Pedrotti**

Lawyer

Palermo, Italy

Claudia Pedrotti is a Palermo-based lawyer working on cases of domestic violence.

She told me that as a lawyer she is forbidden to assist minors of the couples whose cases she is working on. Their children cannot be present in her office and have to stay outside while the cases are being discussed. She is allowed to only address them and their mothers or other legal guardians to the designate social service providers. However, as she works with the mothers, she sees many cases in which minors either experience or witness domestic violence.

Claudia Pedrotti also gave me more information on the case of Amelie. According to her, both Amelie and her daughters lived through the situation “*of very serious violence, and not only witnessed*” which is contradicting the story that I was told by Amelie. The fact that Amelie decided to return to her partner, in Claudia’s opinion, annulled all the work that has been done during her time in the protective housing. However, she says that it was Amelie’s personal choice.

She told me about another case she was invited to assist in. A 6-7-year-old girl of Nigerian origins, who was born in Italy, was often sleeping in the class, not interacting with other children or teachers and showed signs of malnutrition. One day she came to school in tears and the teachers noticed that she had a big bruise on her upper arm. The girl explained with gestures that she was hit with a stick. Hence, the teachers called social services and the case went to the juvenile court.

The parents came to visit Claudia through the public office that helps Nigerian women who are forced to work as prostitutes and finds trainings and educational programmes for them. The mother, in Claudia’s words, was “*tall and beautiful, but didn’t speak Italian or just preferred not to speak to me*”. The father was also Nigerian. They told her that they arrived in Agrigento by boat 7 years before. The woman was pregnant and gave birth to their daughter there, however later they split up. According to them, their daughter went to school, her upper arm was hurting and the teachers called social services because the girl was also not speaking Italian and couldn’t explain what had happened. At that point Claudia became suspicious as she couldn’t believe that it’s possible for child, born 6 or 7 years ago in Italy, to not speak any Italian.

The man explained to her, that in their community sending children back to Nigeria to be raised there for some time is quite a common practice. They usually find a Nigerian person who has documents and a child of about the same age. This person travels back to Nigeria with their child and leaves him or her with their relatives. So, this is what happened to this girl. Hence, she, being born in Italy, became G1.75 in Nigeria, and then, 6 years later, was brought back to Italy where technically became G1.5.

Claudia says that she understands what had happened. *“These mother and daughter didn’t know each other. The mother gave birth to this girl, but then the girl was raised by a grandmother, an aunt, who knows... And then she was brought into this concept of a mother she doesn’t know at all”*. She thinks that all that time the mother was living alone, continued working as a prostitute, doing the trainings with the public office and didn’t feel as a mother at all, until her daughter was brought back to her from Nigeria.

Describing that morning, the mother said that the girl was acting up, didn’t want to go to school and *“made her lose her patience”*. But the more questions were asked, the more offended she was getting and eventually stopped speaking with Claudia at all. The father, on the other hand, tried to convince Claudia to take the case and was assuring her that he can pay for everything and take the girl into his new family. However, when he was asked about his job, he revealed that he was an unauthorised parking valet.

As the mother didn’t like the questions Claudia was asking, the couple didn’t come anymore. She was, instead, contacted by her male colleague who said that the mother came to him for help. Claudia assumes that she probably felt more confident speaking to a male lawyer. At that point the father already wasn’t a part of the case as he decided not to get involved. *“Two months later I open a newspaper and see that he was arrested for dealing drugs. And I felt grateful that they went to another lawyer, as this case was impossible to proceed with”*.

Regarding G1.5 in schools, Claudia Pedrotti told me in her opinion, sometimes school staff chooses not to get involved in some cases (as the case of Dilana) because they don’t want to be involved in a *“migrant family issues”*, which is completely wrong. *“The major focus should be the protection of human rights”*.

On the other hand, she also feels like sometimes schools are forced to take steps back due to cultural or religious particularities of migrant students. *“A teacher I know told me of a situation*

*when she was trying to put his 12-year old Muslim student, who was wearing a hijab, next to a boy as she would've done for an Italian student. The girl was protesting and even started crying, saying that if her older brother who was attending the same school, will pass next to the classroom and see her next to a boy, she will have serious problems at home. So even though in Italy we now have mixed classes, in this case the teacher was forced to take a step back”.*

In her opinion, migration influences the level of domestic violence due to cultural and religious interactions, language barriers and “*different realities*”.

### **3.3 Findings of the Interviews based on the Four Research Questions**

#### **Question 1: Does the fact of migration influence the level of domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?**

One of the core questions that guided this research was whether the fact of migration influences the level of domestic violence in the migrant communities in Italy in the context of G1.5.

My research shows that the variety of factors, connected or resulting from migration, in fact influences the level of domestic violence in migrant communities.

During the analysis of the interviews, we can separate their family stories in the following groups:

- Families without the history of violence – the stories of Adonay, Andrea and Margot.

In two of the cases that I analysed, the participants spoke about a certain tension in their families and even conflicts, that, however, didn't turn into cases of DV. One of the factors that most of the participants were speaking about, was the predisposition for violence – personal, cultural and/or resulting from family patterns.

Margot explained her situation with their moral values and her husband's wisdom. Adonay, even though he stated that he had many conflicts with his parents, told me that he was never considering that as violence, as he was a difficult child. He also explained his family situation with resolving his personal issues regarding abandonment and migrations with self-development work. Andrea didn't really go into the details of her father's "difficult period", during which he couldn't find a job, but stated that her family was and still is very strong and close-knit. In her opinion, one of the important details was that her family stayed apart for a relatively short period of time, both her and her sister were very young and managed to adapt faster, and also, they were at all times living at least with one of their parents, hence it was easier for them to reunite.

- The history of DV started before the migration – the stories of Hiwet, Faven, some of the cases told by Margot.

In these cases, the history of violence started before families move to another country, but after this the level of violence increases – the children might get involved not only as witnesses, but as victims, leverage or an instrument. In some cases, they can also be seen as moral abusers too.

In Hiwet’s case, she felt as she was suffering discrimination and mental violence from her son for three main reasons – influence from the new community (he started “*rebellious*”), the absence of a father figure (since she separated from her abusive husband also due to the opportunities of being an emancipated woman she saw in Italy, farther away from her family) and not respecting her as a mother and a woman (possibly due to the fact that he knew about the violence she was suffering for many years). It ended up with her kicking him out of their house “*to make him grow up*”. This was not seen by her as an act of violence, but as a necessary measure to “*calm him down*”.

In Faven’s case the history of domestic violence started when both of her parents still lived in Eritrea. She attested it to his personality and need for dominations. However, when she and her brother came to live with her parents in Italy, they have met their father for the first time and, due to them not recognising him as a father (as he migrated to Italy when they both were very young), also became a target of domestic violence, both mental and physical.

In the classes, told by Margot, she described a violence as something very much ingrained into the family patterns of many Peruvian families. She attests it to a “*violent male personality*” and says that if a man is violent, he will never change. However, she names a series of conditions, under which the level on violence in a family can increase after migration. Amongst them are female emancipation, economic difficulties and problems with employment, adoption of an “*Italian lifestyle*” by children etc.

- The history of DV started after the migration - the stories of Amalie, Dilana, Andi and Priya, Abbas and Alim

In these cases, the history of violence starts after the family or the G1.5 representant arrived in Italy. In a number of cases the explanation might be in the long absence of the father – Dilana, Amalie and Priya were growing up without their fathers who were working in Italy and were not present in their lives until they arrived in Italy.

The second factor to consider is the parents’ fear of the hosting country – their effort to preserve traditions and raise their children in a strictly traditional matter, not allowing them to have friends outside of the community, insisting on attending religious and community schools. In the cases of

Abbas, Amalie, Priya and to some point Dilana the parents were insisting also on an arranged marriage.

The third factor is related to parents feeling as if their children are not fulfilling their expectations, as in the cases of Dilana and Abbas. Also, in Abbas's case, his parent saw him coming out as gay as a "*sickness that he picked up in Europe*", hence took their younger children back to Pakistan to "*protect them*".

The fourth factor is economical, as in the case of Alim. Firstly, he was sent to Italy with his uncle's family due to the economic opportunities it could've grant him in the future. Secondly, he states that he felt in his uncle's family as in his own up until the moment, when they had more children and the uncle started having problems with his job. At this point he had to cover his living expenses at the age of only 9 years.

The fifth factor is the limited family circle after the migration, as in the case of Andi and Priya.

The sixth one, that influenced the level of violence in all these cases, was the developed law system against domestic violence, human rights movements and better working social services.

The experts in their interviews all agreed that the fact of migration influences the level of DV in the context of G1.5 due to: invisibility of G1.5; inability or unwillingness of school staff to react on the cases where DV is suspected; the G1.5 personal perception of violence; the lack of policies and systemic approach to help the G1.5 representatives, suffering from DV; new levels of vulnerability, acquired after migration, difficult living conditions; alcoholism; migration patterns in which parents and children stay apart for a number of years.

The exact way all these factors influence the level of violence is discussed in the next paragraph.



## **Question 2: How the fact of migration influences the situation with domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?**

Having analysed the results of the interviews of the both groups, amongst these factors for the parents we can name: the loss of a social status, respect and reputation, the desire to compensate it with domination inside the family, frustration, long separation with the children, resulting in them not recognising parents' authority (Adonay, Faven, Amalie, Dilana), desire to keep a controlled and closed off household in order to protect children from the influence of the new society (Amalie, Faven, Dilana), holding on to traditions and religious norms for the same reason (Amalie, Andi and Priya, Abbas), inability to adapt to the new society and/or rejecting it (Amalie, Dilana, Abbas), economic difficulties (Alim).

For the G1.5 the factors that we can identify after the analysis of the interviews were: identity crisis (Hiwet), wanting to live like other teenagers around them (Hiwet, Faven, Amalie, Dilana, Andi and Priya, Margot, Abbas), inability to recognise parents as parents after the long separation (Faven, Adonay, Amalie, Margot), "being different" (Dilana, Abbas), refusing to accept parents' traditions and norms such as arranged marriage (Amalie, Andi and Priya, Abbas), rebelling against extortion (Alim).

The factors, related to society and institutions are laws, services, campaigns, bureaucratic issues. Therefore, to understand in which way migration influences the level of DV and in which conditions, we need to separate the factors into two categories.

Hence, **the level of violence increases:**

- when a family experiences economic difficulty (low income, difficulties with finding job for a man, loss of social status, reputation, respect, etc.) – shown by the cases of Faven and Alim
- after a long separation of parents and children, resulting in a different family dynamic (struggles with the abandonment issues and separation anxiety, resentment etc) – cases of Faven, Amalie, Dilana
- when a family is trying to stay separated from the hosting society – cases of Amalie, Dilana, Andi and Priya, Abbas, partially also the case of Faven. This results in control over G1.5's connections,

friendships, beliefs, and can progress into situations of threats, physical violence, restriction of movement, forced marriages etc.

- when school staff is not ready and not trained to work with students with migration background – the case of Dilana, cases told by Michaela Arcari, Klevisa Ruci and Le Onde staff. In these situations, many cases of domestic violence remain unseen or unaddressed (due to staff's inexperience, lack of training or sensibilisation)

- when the G1.5 members are “different” to their parents’ expectations – the cases of Dilana and Abbas. This “difference” can be seen as a result of an encounter with the hosting society or just be a factor of frustration due to parents’ views or beliefs.

- when migrant families have certain vulnerabilities regarding their immigrational documents – this can become an issue that will force a victim of domestic violence return to an abusive home (Dilana) or be manipulated by an abuser (Amalie). Even though there are the laws that grant the victims of domestic violence a residence permit in order to leave an abusive relationship, the level of knowledge about it still remain very low.

**The level of violence decreases** in some cases due to:

- better working social services (houses for minors-victims of violence, protected housing for women with children, etc) – in cases of Dilana and Alim they were able to escape from the situations of domestic violence because of the existence of social services and protected housing for minors-victims of DV. Both of them told me that back in their countries of origin (Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) the violence they were experiencing would've been seen as normal and they would've had no service to turn to. Amelie was also able to leave and abusive relationship because she was provided consultations and protected housing by Le Onde.

- limited family circle – as the case of Andi and Priya showed, having a limited family circle can be both a risk factor and a helpful condition. This is especially true in cases of honorary killings and forced marriages and can be a factor that can save a life or help avoid an armed conflict between families.

- laws against domestic violence, child abuse and femicide – the existence of these laws in many cases help prevent some of the manifestations of domestic violence. Many participants of the study, both people with migrant background and experts, told me that due to stricter Italian laws

on domestic violence many families stop using physical punishments or at least practice them less. Even though in some cases (like in Alim's story) knowledge of the laws doesn't stop an abuser from becoming violent, their existence gives the victims an opportunity to report abuse and leave an abusive home and/or relationship.

- Human rights and LGBTQI+ movements – in the case of Abbas he was able to avoid a forced marriage to his cousin by getting involved with human rights protection organisations (such as Amnesty International) and learning more about the rights of the LGBTQI+ people in Italy and EU. As he said in his interview, before he had no knowledge of the existence of other LGBTQI+ and didn't know about a possibility of living as an openly gay person, as in Pakistan it was a criminal offence. Also, as he discovered, back in his country of origin gay people from higher class families can live a much more open and full lives than people from a lower class.

Therefore, the fact of migration can both increase and decrease the level of domestic violence regarding G1.5 representatives in Italy.

### **Question 3: Which types of domestic violence can migration trigger?**

My research showed, that migration can trigger or enhance the expression of following types of domestic violence (not exclusively):

- Physical violence (slapping, pushing, beating, strangling, burning etc.).

Many of the participants of the research didn't want to go into details and described the violence they have experienced as "raising hand", which refers to physical violence. This choice is understandable, as speaking about experienced violence can be extremely triggering for victims. Also, as it was described above, physical punishment in many cultures is not seen as violence yet, but as a normal disciplinary method by both perpetrators and victims. Hence, I believe that in many cases even some of the participants of the study were not seeing the less significant manifestations of physical violence (slaps, shaking, punching etc) as such.

- Intimidation (threats to harm the victim, using threatening gestures etc.)

Creation of an atmosphere of fear helps abusers to have more control of victims, manipulate them and control their actions. Alim in his interviews said that, even though his uncle knew that he was doing was against Italian laws, he never expected his nephew to report him as he thought that Alim will be too scared to do so. Dilana's father was threatening to close her at home until she will get her eating disorder under control (expecting that she will get scared and will stop drawing school's attention to their family)

- Emotional abuse (undermining, humiliation, denigration, blaming)

Emotional abuse is used by the perpetrators to subdue their victims to their will and manipulate them easier. It is often one of the first steps in the circle of violence. Margot told me that in her experience in many of the situation of violence blaming and humiliation is used by the abuser to make the victim obey to his will. G1.5 representatives, apart from often being victims of this type of violence, also frequently become an instrument of an emotional abuse.

- Isolation (restrictions on communication, control of victim's social circle)

Amelie, Dilana, Abbas and Priya told me that their parents wanted them to communicate only with the people they approve – people from the same community and religion. Le Onde staff also gave

a few examples of isolation and restriction of movement as one of the forms of control and DV, especially when a victim has a migrant background.

- Financial abuse (unilateral control of money or extortion)

Alim was extorted by his uncle for years, starting from when he was 9 years old and until he reported him for extortion and physical abuse. Amelie stated that one of the methods her parents used to control her was not giving her access to money and, at the same time, prohibiting her to go anywhere else but school (so she couldn't have a part-time job).

- Spiritual abuse (control of victim's religious expression)

Abbas was forced to go to church and show his religiousness on a daily basis. He, Priya and Amalie were prohibited to pick their partners and were at risk of getting married against their will.

- Endangerment (putting the victim in situations of risk and danger)

Dilana was repeatedly sexually abused for several years, from the age of 6 till the age of 12. The first abusers were illegal immigrants from Sri Lanka whom their parents hosted in her room when she was 6 years old. The second abuser was the friend of a family, who was manipulating her into opening the door for him (by threatening that he will call her parents and tell them that she was not home). As she was already scared of her parents, who were abusing her physically and mentally, she had no one to even speak about it. Alim's uncle was forcing him to sell roses in various bars at night, up until as late as 2-3 a.m., which was definitely not a safe environment for a 9-year-old boy.

- Unlawful imprisonment (closing the victim in a restricted space, restriction of victim's freedom of movement)

Alim was closed at home by his uncle and at that point had to report him to the social services and police. Dilana was at risk of being closed at home by her parents. Faven, Amalie, Priya, Abbas and Alim all experienced a restriction of movement to a certain degree.

- Forced marriage

Abbas was forced to get engaged to his cousin and experienced the pressure to marry her for several years. Amalie and Priya were supposed to have arranged marriages as well.

## CONCLUSIONS

The series of interviews I've conducted for this study showed that the fact of migration can influence the level of domestic violence, both increasing and decreasing it.

The level of violence increases when a family experiences economic difficulty (low income, difficulties with finding job for a man, loss of social status, reputation, respect, etc.); after a long separation of parents and children, resulting in a different family dynamic (struggles with the abandonment issues and separation anxiety, resentment etc); when a family is trying to stay separated from the hosting society; when school staff is not ready and not trained to work with students with migration background; when the G1.5 members are "different" to their parents' expectations; when migrant families have certain vulnerabilities regarding their immigrational documents.

Violence level decreases in some cases due to: better working social services (houses for minors-victims of violence, protected housing for women with children, etc); limited family circle; laws against domestic violence, child abuse and femicide; human rights and LGBTQI+ movements.

The fact of migration can trigger such types of domestic violence as physical and emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation and unlawful imprisonment, financial and spiritual abuse, endangerment and forced marriage.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following chapter will present a summary of the study, major conclusions based on the results of the interviews and bibliographical research and a list of recommendations, addressed to:

- Policy makers
- Social workers and school staff members
- Future researchers.

Some of the recommendations were given by the participants of the study, some were concluded from the results of both bibliographical and filed researches.

The research was conducted with the hope of bringing the particular conditions of Generation 1.5 in Italy that are often overlooked by policy makers and researchers and better understanding the risk factors for domestic violence that are related to these conditions.

I hope that this research will become a starting point for future studies on domestic violence in the context of Generation 1.5 and related topics.

## 4.1 Summary of the research

Over the last two decades Italy has moved from a country of emigration to a country of immigration (Van Oudenhoven, Ward and Masgoret, 2006). As estimated by Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, in the period 2011-2065, according to the prognosis, based on demographic projections created by Istat, natural dynamics in Italy will be negative by 11,5 million people (28,5 million will be born and 40 million diseased), when the migration dynamic will stay positive by 12 million (17,9 million will enter and 5,9 million will leave the country). So, as the number of migrant people and, consequently, the number of young migrants is growing, the society and the researchers need to look into the struggles, risks and life experiences of youngsters from different cultures.

According to Logar, Weiss, Stricker and Gurtner (2009) migrant women and women of ethnic minorities often miss social networks and language skills, have fewer resources and, in many cases, are financially dependent on their husbands. Same goes for young migrant people that also need to adapt to the new social and cultural context upon their arrival to Italy.

Migrant condition is always a risk factor: the scientific literature shows that migrants in Europe get menial jobs that are dangerous and poorly paid and lack of opportunities for career advancement more than residents. The majority of migrants who suffer domestic violence do not seek help fearing to reveal their illegal status, to lose parental rights, or because they lack economic independence and knowledge of their rights.

The main purpose of this research is to explore the stories of Generation 1.5 in Italy who migrated to Italy at the age of 5-19 years, during their young formative years together with their families or later, via family reunification procedure.

Migrant people already are in the position of extreme vulnerability in their new countries due to their legal and economic position, lack of family support, language competence and knowledge of local laws. Generation 1.5 representatives, who were born in different countries, migrated in a young age and are very well aware of the life “before” and “after” the big move, are one of the most vulnerable groups inside migrant communities, as they experience double vulnerability.



The main research questions of this study deal with the lives and migration stories of Italian Generation 1.5 representatives, their parents and experts whom I interviewed. They are:

- 1) Does the fact of migration influence the level of domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?
- 2) How the fact of migration influences the situation with domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?
- 3) Which types of domestic violence can migration trigger?

My research is built on the interpretivism/constructivism basis and uses narrative to describe specific details of a particular reality they study (Neuman 2011). It is built on the insider perspective, studies the social reality from the perspective of the people themselves, and is informed by feminist standpoint theory which suggests that research, particularly which focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized.

I used a qualitative approach, and conducted my interviews using the elements of “story of life”, phenomenological and cognitive interviews.

The bibliographical research was conducted from 2015 to 2018 in Italy and Belgium.

The field collection of data was conducted from 2017 to 2018 in Italy (Palermo, Turin, Bergamo).

The total of 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted - in-depth and in-person or via Skype.

Interviews are being conducted with two main groups:

- a) individuals with migrant background
- b) experts

For data collection I used methodologies of qualitative research such as life story approach that is based on narratives about one's life or relevant parts thereof to interview people who suffered the violence, elements of phenomenological and cognitive interviews to interview those who witnessed violence. I used open questions and, as all the interviews were semi-structured, the flow of each one of them was determined by the information that the respondent were providing.

To report the collected data, I used the narrative format to describe the interviews with the first group of participants. The descriptions were focused not only on the descriptions of the events and their chronology, but also on the context, settings, feelings of the respondents, words they used.

## 4.2 Conclusions to the study

I grouped the finding of the study according to the research questions and the information that was received during the interviews.

The results related to the research question 1 (Does the fact of migration influence the level of domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?) were interesting, as they showed the variety of ways, in which the level of domestic violence in migrant families in the context of G1.5 can influence the level of domestic violence. A rich collection of cases was collected through the series of interviews with both people with migrant background (mothers of G1.5 and G1.5 themselves) and analysed to confirm my assumptions and come to conclusions.

The results related to the research question 2 were very important for the study (How the fact of migration influences the situation with domestic violence in migrant communities in Italy in the context of Generation 1.5?) as they showed the way migration can influence the level of domestic violence in a migrant family with G1.5.

The factors that help to decrease the level of violence were a significant finding potentially leading to finding effective methods of assisting domestic violence victims and preventing the cases of domestic violence in migrant families.

The results related to the research question 3 were less significant, although also important, as it showed which types of domestic violence could be triggered by migration. One of the most important results regarding these questions was establishing connection between migration and abuse of religious beliefs and forced marriages as a measure some migrant parents take in order to shield their children from the influence of the hosting society and its culture and religion.

Hence, I can conclude that my researched have confirmed many of the previously published scientific works regarding the influence of migration on the level of domestic violence regarding, in the case of my research, not only women, but also G1.5 representatives. It also showed that in some case, specific characteristics of migrant population (f.e. limited family and social circle) can both enhance the manifestation of DV and decrease the level of violence, as in the case of Priya and Andi, which is something that I haven't found many mentions of in other scientific works.

## 4.3 Recommendations

### Recommendations for policy makers

- **Addressing the specific needs with attention to the particularities of the generation:**

As Generations 1.5 is often considered to be either first or second generations, the specific conditions of migration, family relationships and legal questions are usually not taken into the account. Hence, policies cannot be effective, when they are not specifically tailored for the generation of migrants they are addressing, as not all populations with a migration background experience the same struggles or advantages. Even G1.5 cannot be seen as strictly homogeneous, as there are large differences in lived experiences inside this group, that depend on the variety of factors such as country of origin, nationality (of origin), gender, class, age, racial identity, etc.

- **Integration when integration is needed:**

As stated above, the G1.5 is not a homogeneous generation due to a number of factors (the age of arrival, original nationality, etc), therefore the approach to their integration has to take this heterogeneity into consideration. The integration of G1.25 representatives such as unaccompanied minors is usually happening under the control of reception centres, and the integration of G1.75 migrant usually is happening naturally due to their young age. However, there is a definitive lack of integration policies and procedures addressed towards G1.5 representatives, who arrive with or after their family members and reside in family homes. Policies see them as first-generation migrants, which is correct and doesn't reflect their needs. In their case, integration has to take place upon their arrival - in schools, kindergartens, social centres etc., when it is needed by G1.5 and necessary for their success in the society.

- **Inclusion strategies over integration courses:**

As every generation of migrants has different particularities and therefore different needs, the policies need to be tailored specifically for a generation. G1.5 representatives attending school are more in need of inclusion strategies than typical integration courses created for first-generation migrants and focused on providing knowledge on history and popular culture, as well as language

learning. G1.5 can benefit more from an approach unique to their needs – orientation, adaptation and inclusion.

- **More attention to gender equality and ending DV**

Though domestic violence is a universal phenomenon, it has very distinctive features depending on the context. Migrant conditions and G1.5 representatives in a migrant family need to receive special attention from policy makers in order to minimize the risks, tailor effective action plans and give young people who belong to Generation 1.5 information, consultations and help needed to recognize domestic violence in all forms, ask for help when help is needed and have a possibility to leave an abusive family to be transferred into a protective housing. A strong action is also needed on the issue of forced and/or child marriages, in which victims, often still school students, are sent back to the country of origin to “stay with an aunt”, which later turns out to be a marriage arrangement. There is an urgent need for policies that will address this form of domestic violence as this is one of the issues that is very hard to prove.

- **Integration is not an exclusive responsibility and issue of migrant population**

For the successful integration of migrant generations into the hosting societies, the policies need to also reflect the societies commitment to fight discrimination and strive for equality and equal access to opportunities. They also need to consider the need for specialised trainings addressed to school teachers and psychologists, social workers and other groups of professionals, that enter into a close contact with the G1.5 representatives. Actions against childhood labour in the context of migrant families is also needed, as some communities start exploiting children from a very young age.

## **Recommendations for social workers and school staff**

### **- Acquire more information on the specific conditions of G1.5**

As was discussed above, G1.5 is the migrant generation that often lives through many abandonments and can suffer from anxieties, difficulties with accepting their new realities and adapting to them. Many of them have yet to establish new relationships with their parents, others struggle to get used to the new culture, language and surroundings in general. They often become targets of discrimination and bullying in school due to being new, different and not being fluent in Italian. Knowing what they are dealing with and what can be the risk factors for this generation is a crucial part of work with G1.5 in the fields of education and social work.

### **- The importance of creation of a relationship of trust**

Many of the newly arrived G1.5 representatives are specifically having difficulties with opening up and trusting people due to their family situations, migration stories, abandonment issues, possible legal problems regarding immigration documents in their families etc. However, by building the relationships of trust and support from the beginning, teachers, school psychologists and social workers can not only make them feel more comfortable in the new surroundings, help them adapt easier and become a part of the class and society, but also see the signs of any difficulties, problems or signs of a potential abuse faster and act on them when it is needed.

### **- Pay attention to warnings signs**

G1.5 youngsters, who are showing signs of domestic abuse, need to be addressed with attention and caution due to the specific features of this generation, described above. The same goes for young people who are showing signs of eating disorders, malnutrition, exhaustion, anxiety, self-harming (such as cutting and substance abuse) - they might be experiencing different types of domestic violence. In these cases, the rapport of trust and support is very important, and children and youngsters should be monitored on daily basis with caution. Many of them might be reluctant to talk about their family issues due to cultural taboos on the topic or fear of abuser's anger. Many will also refuse to report their parents or siblings out of fear of legal troubles and deportation risk.

### **- Act on suspicions with fast, but with caution**

In some cases, for example if a forced/child marriage back in the country of origin is being planned by the victim's parents, timing and caution are crucial. In many cases a victim is not fully aware of when he or she will be sent back in order to get married and no time can be wasted, and her or his parents may speed up the process if they will feel like they are being monitored by the social services. Hence, caution and timing are very important in addressing the cases of domestic violence in migrant communities.

## **Recommendations for Future Researchers**

### **- Further research into this topic is very much needed**

As the topic of domestic violence and family relationships is something many G1.5 prefer not to speak about, it remained invisible for many years. Hence, a further research is very much needed, as, in my opinion, there is much more to be discovered on the topic, especially in the context of different communities. I suggest a deeper study of the following communities: Romanian, Albanian, Moroccan, Chinese, Philippine, Indian, Egyptian, Senegalese, as well as the communities that were to some point researched by me: Eritrean, Sri Lankan, Peruvian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

However, a research on G1.5 in the biggest Eastern European communities in Italy (Romanian, Ukrainian, Moldovan) I find potentially interesting, but problematic, as the migration patterns of these communities and my research showed a significant number of G2.5 children, not G1.5.

### **- A study that will compare G1.5 with other generations of migrant and/or with Italian youth.**

There is a definite need for a complex research that will compare the G1.5 with either G2.0, G2.5 or the native Italian youth in order to see the difference between the realities of experienced or witnessed DV of G1.5 and other youngsters residing in Italy.

This research has the potential to give even deeper understanding of the migration-specific patterns of DV in the context of migrant generation or in comparison between the migrant youth of different generations and Italian young people.

### **- Strong rapport is important**

Due to the delicateness of the topic and past trauma, many of the G1.5 who had suffered domestic violence remain very reluctant to talk about it and about their life stories in general. As many of the stories of migration and integration of these generations prove to be somewhat problematic (traveling with relatives on falsified documents, their parents hosting illegal immigrants etc) a number of G1.5 will prefer not to speak to a researcher at all. The same goes for their personal feeling and traumas, that many of them are not ready to describe. A strong rapport of trust is needed from the first minutes – a respondent has to be assured that his or her name will not be used in the

study if they don't want to be recognised, and that "off the record" parts will not be recorded in general or not be taken into consideration during the analysis. A researcher needs to ensure them that is they don't want to reply to certain questions, they will not be forced to. It is also very useful to know the context they are coming from and find similarities in your personal stories.

I feel like it was easier for me to create a rapport with the participants of my study due to a number of factors – being a migrant woman myself, speaking English (so some of them could explain some concepts easier), even due to me officially being Orthodox (Hiwet was very happy to hear about this and even invited me to go with her to a mass).

- **Don't limit your search for subject to anti-violence centres**

In the beginning of my research I have had some difficulties in finding participants for my study – as was mentioned above, some of the centres that provide shelter or legal help victims of DV, don't collaborate with researchers due to confidentiality issues, as some of their client are still in legal proceedings and cannot reveal their whereabouts.

What has proved to be useful is searching for participants through networking and university connections. Many of the respondents who had a history of domestic violence and were found this way, have already distanced themselves from their past and were pretty willing to give me an interview in order to share their stories.



## **Conclusions**

Overall, I can conclude that my research was conducted accordingly to the research topic, main research questions and methodology. The results of the study are important and bring many details about the situation with domestic violence in migrant families in the context of the G1.5 to light.

The recommendations, addressed to policy makers, social workers and school staff members can help to improve the policies regarding G1.5 and domestic violence prevention, as well as protect those who are already experiencing DV. They are also addressed to future researchers, as the future research is needed. My recommendations provide some guidelines for a more successful search for participants and effective conduction of the interviews.

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## ANNEXES

### ANNEX A

#### Interview script – Sample questions for the interviews with people with migrant background

General information	Gender
	Age
	Origins/place of birth
	Migrated at the age of
	Currently lives
	Marital status:
	Current employment status:
Biographical part	How can you describe your family?
	Can you describe the relationships in your family?
	How did you feel in your family before migration?
	Did you feel protected?
	If no, why?
	Did you ever experience violence?
	If yes, which types?
	Can you describe the first/worst/last episode?

History of migration	Who decided to move to another country?
	Did everyone in your family agree to this?
	How did you feel?
	How much time did it take you to adapt?
	What was the easiest part of the adaptation?
	What was the most difficult part of the adaptation?
	How do you think, who in your family had the most difficult time to adapt?
	Who in your family adapted the first?
	Did you feel any change in the family dynamic?
	How did you feel in your family after migration?
	How do you feel in this moment in this country?
Risk factors	Which differences did you notice between your country and the country you are in?
	Did you feel the need to hide something about you? Why?
	What cannot you manifest or say in front of the others? Why?
	If you will not hide this, what will happen? What will your family, society or the police do?
	What do you want to change in your life?
	Do you feel independent in your everyday life?
Was your freedom of movement ever restricted?	

	Do you have friends outside of your community (national, religious)?
	How can you evaluate your level of Italian (other local language)?
	Do you have a job?
	Who's managing your finances?
	Are you taking any medications/have a need for any medical procedures?
	Can you go to your doctor on your own?
Vision of violence	What is violence?
	What is domestic violence?
	How do you think, in which cases can you justify violence?
	Who commits domestic violence more often?
	Why people can be violent towards each other?
	Did you ever commit violent actions towards others?
	Did you ever experience violence towards yourself?
Community	What is the most common migration patter in your community?
	If I ask a person from your community to define violence, what he/she will tell me?
	What characterises your community's G1.5 in Italy?
Specific cases	What happened?
	What did you feel was going to happen?
	When did it happened for the first time?
	When did it happen for the last time?

	Which time was the worst?
	Describe how (abuser) was acting? What was said to you?
	What did (abuser) do or say to make you feel afraid?
	Were any threats made against you? Against other people, that are important to you? What were these threats?
	Did you speak to anyone about it?
	Did you report what had happened? If no, why?
	Do you know where to ask for help?

## ANNEX B

### Participants of the study – people with migrant background

No.	Name*	Gender	Age**	Place of birth	Year of migration	Age of migration	Place of residence**	Marital status**	Employment status**
1	Hiwet	F	43	Asmara, Eritrea	2000	26	Turin, Italy	Divorced	Cultural mediator
2	Faven	F	43	Asmara, Eritrea	1984	11	Palermo, Italy	Single	Cultural mediator, psychologist
3	Adonay	M	44	Ethiopia	1980	7	Palermo, Italy	Married	Cultural mediator
4	Amalie	F	26	Sri Lanka	1999	8	Palermo, Italy	Separated	Unemployed
5	Dilana	F	24	Jeffna, Sri Lanka	1999	5	Palermo, Italy	Single	Student
6	Andi	M	36	Jeffna, Sri Lanka	1984, 1991	3, 10	Palermo, Italy	Married to Priya, has two kids	Entrepreneur
7	Priya	F	33	Sri Lanka	1996	12	Palermo, Italy	Married to Andi, has two kids	Teacher
8	Margot	F	60	Huancavelica, Peru	2000	42	Turin, Italy	Married, has children	Cultural mediator, community leader, one of the founders of the association of Peruvian women



9	Andrea	F	27	Lima, Peru	2000	10	Milan, Italy	Single	Student, interpreter, author
10	Abbas	M	31	Lahore, Pakistan	1999	15	Bergamo, Italy	Single	Movie director, human rights activist, author
11	Alim	M	25	Sylhet, Bangladesh	2000	7	Palermo, Italy	Single	Student, cultural mediator, translator

\* Most of the names are changed

\*\* At the time of the interview

## ANNEX C

### Participants of the study – experts

No.	Name	Gender	Place of residence*	Employment status*
1	Michaela Arcari	F	Turin, Italy	Social worker
2	Klevisa Ruci	F	Turin, Italy	Civil Service volunteer at Centro Studi Sereno Regis, participant of No Hate movement
3	Flor Vidaurre	F	Turin, Italy	Cultural mediator working with asylum seekers
4	Anna Immordino	F	Palermo, Italy	Psychologist at Le Onde
5	Manuela Emme	F	Palermo, Italy	Psychologist at Le Onde
6	Mara Cortimiglia	F	Palermo, Italy	Reception manager at Le Onde
7	Delfina Nunez	F	Palermo, Italy	Cultural mediator, president of Consulta delle Culture
8	Claudia Pedrotti	F	Palermo, Italy	Lawyer

\* At the time of the interview