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From “making the difference” to “making the differences”. The perception of violence against women among young people

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From “making the difference” to “making the differences”. The perception of violence against women among young people

Angela Mongelli

Abstract: This paper deals with the issues of gender diversity, and “male-female” interactions within a secondary school located in Apulia, Italy. This research shows the difficulties, expressed by High School students, as they try to manage their discourses around “equality and difference”, despite their apparent awareness, exposure, and knowledge of this phenomenon. As shown, the social negotiation of gender and sexual diversity, are neither simple nor unilateral, phenomenon. As shown the social negotiations of gender and sexual diversity, are neither simple nor unilateral, but rather they are the product of interaction of a multiplicity of factors, that evolve overtime, and are affected by different socio-political and power disparities. Demythologizing our assumption about gender diversity is just the beginning for lasting social change, especially as people internalized attitudes, opinions and stereotypes still persist and define their inoperative visions of the world and managing of differences. More crucially, they define people’s perpetuation and normalization about of violence against women.

Keywords: diversity, violence, young people, difference between men and women, school

Foreword

The topic of diversity, which has been widely debated at the scientific level by social sciences and other disciplines (i.e. hard sciences) (Cavalli-Sforza, 1995), has become the object of mass media storytelling and daily conversations. The literature produced on diversity has focused its attention in particular on the differences linked to ethnicity or religious affiliation and has been linked to gender inequality and its effects only recently. Most of the scientific analyses on diversity, even those of common sense, must come to terms with its complexity, since diversity is linked on the one hand “to the expression of differences that manifest themselves in public spaces and to the consequent claims of rights and, on the other hand, to the existence of discriminations”, that are mainly caused by the misunderstanding or rejection of the same diversity (Wieviorka, 2008, p.13). In the light of these considerations, we examined diversity and its declinations within the framework of gender, with a focus on the drifts related to violence against women.

The issue

Violence against women is a topic that is inscribed within the most ambitious debate on social inequalities directly related to diversity and its positive or negative assessment. Inequalities are labelled as positive or negative during social assessment processes: this happens with the attribution of certain characteristics which, themselves, would only be attributes of the subject without being invested with an assessment and consequent positive or negative evaluation (Besozzi, 2017). Essentially, inequalities find their starting point in the characteristics of the subjects (Zanfrini, 2011) but, rather, they are processes of social evaluation, which would only be transformed otherwise by attributes of the subject. This is the case of the male/female distinction, a natural attribute (Rumiati, 2010; Malo, 2017), which is not hierarchical itself: it is, rather, a distinction that, however, turns into a gender difference when moving to the social level (from male and female to man-woman). Upon the need for intolerability of differences, at a social (and even educational) level we try to eliminate diversity¹ by creating homologated universes, namely communities of similar fellows where the individual is urged to identify with the community constructs and, therefore, the pluralities of subjects are not always respected. In this regard, it is worth recalling

¹ Thus otherness and diversity are not attributed to an individual as different from another, but only to some who have “particular characteristics” that make them dissimilar to the standardisation of the group. It is exactly for this reason that the presence of the so-called “different” in society, such as at school, generates conflicts, undermines the normal functioning of the system and strongly conditions the education and growth of individuals, especially when it comes to children and/or adolescents

Don Milani, when he stated that a genuinely democratic society strives to take equality into account, combining it with respect for differences² and seeking interventions (educational, informative, etc.) that can be suitable to support this perspective.

However, these stimulating and prospective intuitions found several difficulties in asserting themselves on the socio-cultural scene, so that equality is still pursued by denying differences. This tendency to homogenisation uses a symbolic code that simplifies equality rather than making it more adherent to specificity (of contexts, subjects, etc.), producing in this way increasing conflicts that are often latent (Donati, 2007).

Only recently the demand to consider both instances (equality and difference), namely the need to guarantee equality by ensuring diversity, has become necessary. Equality can also be imposed by laws (i.e. gender policies) and satisfied by bureaucracy: in these cases the persistence of inequalities is favoured through a stereotypical look. In order to trigger transformation, changes are needed in cultural models and lifestyles, which are places where stereotypes and representations of the world still persist. Thus, in spite of the efforts to promote gender equality (such as access to the same educational opportunities) and recognition of the conviviality of differences, men and women still differ within social constructs. Violent behaviors against women³ are a touchstone for the persistence of stereotypes and the difficulty of producing a cultural change in the male universe that implies the existence of an asymmetry of power between genders.

In Bauman’s vision (2008), it is even more difficult to produce this change: in this case, violence is considered a phenomenon that cannot be traced back only to a simplistic explanation of linear causation, but also to a multifactorial causation that includes both macro reasons, such as the deposition of the nation-state, and the micro reasons, such as the weakness of relational models (Malo, 2017) and the flexibility of relationships. This issue was also addressed by P. Bourdieu (1998), who framed male violence against women within the conflict paradigm, considering it a symbol of the dominant vio-

² Against the segregation of training, work, etc. The philosophy of difference assumes that the notion of humankind is falsely neutral: in this it sees only the homologation of the female sex to the male one, which is carried out to confirm the actual conditions of disadvantage and subordination, behind the affirmations of the universality of rights. Instead, the gender difference should be recognised as a value.

³ The UN Declaration on the elimination of violence against women (1993) defines violence against women as “any act of gender-based violence that causes or may cause physical, sexual or psychological harm to women, including the threats of such acts, arbitrary coercion or deprivation of liberty, whether it occurs in public or private life “. Since the 2000s, violence against women has been taken as an institutional problem and investigated with greater punctuality. In Europe, the Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence, the so-called Istanbul Convention (2011), states that gender-based violence is a violation of human rights (Article 3).

lence against the dominated and perpetrated through the incorporation of patterns of perception and evaluation of oneself and others, with the complicity of learned mental patterns that define the male habitus⁴. In other words, the scholar (Bourdieu) traces the masculine dominance over the feminine gender to a foundation of continuous and precocious symbolic habits (ways of walking, talking, behaving, turning the eyes, sitting down, etc.). These habits are incorporated thanks to the family and school education system, in which female inferiority is assumed as a habitus. According to Bourdieu, this is very difficult to transform, as it allows to invest in the game of relationships (i.e. within the field)⁵ by finding the social sense of one’s own identity, even when it brings to obedience. This is useful to understand why women obeyed, and still obey, to symbolic violence-in some cases becoming also its accomplice. The symbolic dimension introduced by Bourdieu is also present, in a different way, in Morin’s analysis (1963) with regards to action and its decoding. The French sociologist argued that action is based on what one thinks, opinions, judgments and prejudices, emotions and representations of reality and previously structured constructs, whether they are more or less realistic or conditioned by the collective imagination, that is organised-in turn-around some archetypes subsequently transformed into stereotypes. This is learning based on classifications, points of view, standardised and unilateral knowledge of reality, carried out during the socialisation process, a trait that returns in the differential evaluation of genres.

The Research

Talking about diversity in contemporary society seems to become more and more difficult, despite the increased awareness of this phenomenon and a better knowledge of it thanks to several studies and researches. The phenomenon known as diversity is not simple, nor unitary and implies a multiplicity of factors of change that present it differently, from time to time. The work of demythologisation has perhaps just begun, but attitudes, opinions and stereotypes still persist and continue to produce visions of the world and conceptions of diversity and differences.

⁴ Habitus indicates something received or acquired through learning, first through family education and then through school education, and which is nevertheless experienced by the individual who “wears” it as a natural disposition, helping to constitute the meaning and value of his social identity. The habitus coincides with the set of dispositions that individuals manifest through the complete psychophysical internalisation of valid rules in the game (ludus) which is practiced in a given field.

⁵ Not only the set of power relations within the field structure the differences between the positions occupied by agents, but also the ones between groups and institutions that are in competition among each other in the field.

In light of what we stated above, we tried to deepen the analysis of the topic in relation to young students. The survey⁶, which is analysed here, is part of a project initiated by a group of online schools, headed by MIUR, named EDU.CO.RI.DI, (acronym of Educazione alla conoscenza e al rispetto della diversità- Education to knowledge and respect for diversity). The aim of the investigation was to analyse the attitudes of secondary school pupils (first and second degree) with regards to the topic of diversity and its variation as violence against women. The idea on which this research is based was to fathom the intricate relationship between social and individual representations and weigh specific gender and age differences in relation to the phenomenon under investigation. In particular, the specific objectives of the survey were to reconstruct the students’ perception of diversity, reconstruct the presence/absence of prejudices or stereotypes connected to the diversity of Man/Woman, seize any (diversified) levels of stereotyped attitudes, yet to identify the presence of prejudices or stereotypes related to the causes of violence against women and finally highlight the orientation that students have towards gender equality.

Methodology

Detection plan⁷ - Sampling

The subject of this research (violence against women) and the characteristics of the population involved (adolescents) led to obligatory methodological choices, starting from the identification of the statistical collective to be interviewed: secondary school students (first and second degree) involved in the project. The reference population consists of all the pupils enrolled in the third year of secondary schools and those enrolled in the second year of high schools. Overall, four secondary schools and seven high schools (Professional, Technical, Commercial, Technological, Scientific High School, High School of Human Sciences) were involved. The school curricula were not sampled, as in the research all the schools that participated in the project

⁶ The author was first responsible for the research and then for the educational intervention, funded by the Public Notice MIUR-DPO/Unar of 11/25/2014, which had the Panetti-Pitagoria Institute of Bari as head of a network of schools. The network of schools was formed by the Balilla-Imbriani Institute, Bari (lower secondary school), De Marinis Institute, Bari (lower secondary school), Galilei Institute, Bari (lower secondary school), Massari Institute, Bari (lower secondary school), Gorjux Institute, Bari (second degree secondary school), Tridente Institute, Bari (secondary school), Vivante Institute, Bari (secondary school), Bianchi Dottula Institute, Bari (secondary school), Pitagora Institute, Bari (secondary school), Panetti Institute, Bari (secondary school), Medi Institute, Galatone, Lecce (secondary school).

⁷ As it is known, the detection plan in a statistical survey is fundamental to establish not only what are the characteristics to be detected, but also the way (and place) in which to carry out data collection.

of online schools had to be taken into consideration. In order to optimise resources and time, we chose to use sample data; following the procedure described, our final sample was made up of 460 students. For organisational reasons, we decided to halve the size of the reference population by extracting 50% of the students in each class of research interest, namely those enrolled in the third year of secondary schools those enrolled in the second year of high schools: this was made with random sampling, using tables with random numbers and school lists. A random stratified sample was provided by each school involved in the project, in proportion to the size of the classes of these schools. At the end of the survey, the sample was found to be made up of 460 students and pupils (248 men and 195 women, 17 students did not indicate gender), 148 attending secondary schools and the remaining 312 attending high schools. The sample appears to be slightly unbalanced with respect to gender (about 54% of males against about 42% of females), probably because of the specific curricula of the schools involved in the project.

The age structure of the sample of students who were interviewed seems to be compliant with the respective classes, except for some anomalous values: in these cases, presumably, either they had started school before (just a few), or they were repeating the year. Data collection took place through direct detection with the support of a researcher, whose presence proved to be necessary to provide instructions to complete the questionnaire, to dispel any doubts that could have arisen in the answers and also to involve the students actively in the survey. For the collection of data it was decided to use the questionnaire, because it is a tool that allows the administration to a substantial number of subjects in a relatively short time. The survey lasted two months. In the initial part of the questionnaire the students who were interviewed reported the socio-registry details and the socio-economic information of the parents, which were essential to analyse the data through the socio-economic variable of the family to which they belong. Questions to learn about the attitudes and feelings of young people about “diversity” followed. The second part of the questionnaire was specifically related to the issue of violence against women, with questions concerning the knowledge of the phenomenon and the feelings/attitudes that violence against women generates in students. The third part of the questionnaire contained questions concerning the subjects involved in an act of violence (whoever perpetrates it and whoever suffers it) with the aim of detecting the presence of prejudices both against those who perform an act of violence and those who suffer it. In the last part of the questionnaire students were asked to express their degree of agreement/disagreement with respect to some statements. The aim of this part of the interview was to identify the presence of stereotypes, the degree of tolerance/intolerance to violence and the perception of the cause of the phenomenon.

The results of the research

The influence of the family socio-cultural status

In order to assess whether and how much the “social level” of the family of origin affects the opinions of the students, a Socio-Economic Family Status variable (Status Socio-Economic Familiare-SSEF) was calculated, although only partially due to the lack of objective variables. This variable followed the approach launched by the OECD in the PISA investigations and also by INVALSI. This variable derives, logically, from the information provided by the same students interviewed about the educational qualifications and employment of both parents.

Since the calculation methodology of the SSEF indicator followed only partially the OECD-PISA and INVALSI approach, an analysis of the main components of the 4 variables involved was made: father’s and mother’s qualifications and father’s and mother’s occupation; as these last two are expressed in nominal and non-ordinal modes, the use of the classic PCA was forcibly excluded, but the analysis of the categorical main components (CATPCA) was employed, together with the ALSOS algorithm⁸. This acronym stands for Alternative Least Square Optimal Scaling, and one of the by-products of the ALSOS algorithm is an optimal quantification of the observed variables, in any scale of measurement; if they are of a categorical type (ordinal or nominal scale), a quantitative value is associated with each of their modalities, assimilated to the determination of a continuous variable. The average of the quantitative values associated with the individual modes of the original variables⁹ provides a variable that irregularly approximates the normal curve. By classifying this variable according to the quartiles, we obtained four ordered and (numerically) almost equivalent categories, whose relative meaning, in terms of the cultural and economic level of the family, (Lower, Middle-lower, Middle-upper, Upper) approximates very well the concept of socio-economic family status. The relationship between the SSEF indicator and its own variables is very close, but not uniquely identified with one or the other (see table 1).

⁸ For methodological details, see De Leeuw (1976); Meulman & Heiser (1999), Meulman et al., (2004); a simple dissertation in Italian is present in d’Ovidio (2012).

⁹ It is worth stating that, when there were missing values, they were initially excluded from the CATPCA analysis and then replaced with the modal value of each transformed variable. Furthermore, in the analysis, the occupational characteristics were reordered beforehand based on the average number of years of study of the parents, in order to improve the final results (the reliability of the system, measured with an α index by Crombach, thus assumes the maximum value possible here: 0.675).

Table 1 - Distribution of the interviewed subjects according to the cultural-economic characteristics of the parents and the level of Socio-Economic Family Status derived from them

	Socio-Economic Family Status				
Characteristics of the parents	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Middle-Lower</i>	<i>Middle-Upper</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>Total</i>
Qualification of the father					
<i>No father</i>	9	0	0	0	9
<i>None/Unknown</i>	16	6	1	0	23
<i>Primary School</i>	14	7	3	0	24
<i>Secondary School</i>	69	60	43	8	180
<i>High School</i>	7	30	58	40	135
<i>Higher Education (University)</i>	1	3	15	59	78
<i>N.R.</i>	3	2	4	2	11
Qualification of the mother					
<i>No mother</i>	3	0	0	0	3
<i>None/Unknown</i>	15	2	0	0	17
<i>Primary School</i>	14	3	1	0	18
<i>Secondary School</i>	73	63	31	4	171
<i>High School</i>	6	32	77	40	155
<i>Higher Education (University)</i>	3	6	11	64	84
<i>N.R.</i>	5	2	4	1	12
Father's Occupation					
<i>No father</i>	11	1	0	0	12
<i>Unemployed (houseman)</i>	11	4	5	1	21
<i>Workman or day labourer</i>	63	34	11	2	110
<i>Employee or sales assistant</i>	11	48	59	20	138
<i>Teacher or Official</i>	1	1	11	16	29
<i>Director or Manager</i>	0	1	2	8	11
<i>Freelance</i>	1	1	7	36	45
<i>Self-employed worker (with no employees)</i>	19	10	9	3	41
<i>Entrepreneur (with employees)</i>	2	7	18	21	48
<i>N.R.</i>	0	1	2	2	5

Mother's Occupation					
<i>No mother</i>	3	0	0	0	3
<i>Unemployed (housewife)</i>	95	75	51	18	239
<i>Workman or day labourer</i>	12	8	6	1	27
<i>Employee or sales assistant</i>	7	12	45	30	94
<i>Teacher or Official</i>	0	1	2	21	24
<i>Director or Manager</i>	0	0	0	4	4
<i>Freelance</i>	1	1	0	20	22
<i>Self-employed worker (with no employees)</i>	1	7	10	3	21
<i>Entrepreneur (with employees)</i>	0	2	9	9	20
<i>N.R.</i>	0	2	1	3	6
Total	119	108	124	109	460

The SSEF is statistically connected to the school attended by young students ($p < 0.01$): indeed, this does not mean that a given school influences the same Status, but rather the opposite, presumably due to the (fairly common) connection between the SSEF and the area of residence, which often determines the choice of the school; therefore, it seems to be a spurious or indirect connection. In any case, among the secondary schools, two have the highest percentage of pupils coming from families with upper or middle-upper SSEF, whereas among the involved high schools the connection is less clear and evident: in this case, a larger concentration of pupils whose families belong to the intermediate levels of SSEF and greater proportion of pupils coming from families with lower level SSEF emerge.

On the other hand, the influence of the SSEF variable on the opinions expressed by the surveyed pupils is much less statistically significant, being it connected only to some marginal elements. Instead, its aggregation is slightly better in only two modes, below the median (“medium-low” level) and from the median upwards (“medium-high” level): as it is shown in Table 2, the adherence to the statement that “*diversity is to be valued*” is significantly more frequent among the latter, as well as that “*violence against women is only a manifestation of male anger*”, that “*whoever perpetrates violence against a woman is a person like the others*”, that the main cause of violence is *poverty or unemployment*, and finally to discuss about “*the phenomenon of violence against women with teachers*”. In some cases, these percentages are very low, but still significantly higher than for students with the lowest level of SSEF.

Table 2 - Distribution of the interviewed subjects according to the opinion on some statements, for Socio-Economic Family Status

Agreement with the statements	Socio-Economic Family Status		Total	P-value
	Medium-Low	Medium-High		
<i>Diversity has to be valued</i>				
No	80,6	67,4	73,9	0,001
Yes	19,4	32,6	26,1	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	
<i>Violence against women is only a manifestation of male anger</i>				
No	98,2	93,6	95,9	0,017
Yes	1,8	6,4	4,1	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	
<i>Violence against women is an inequitable act</i>				
No	50,7	61,4	56,1	0,025
Yes	49,3	38,6	43,9	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	
<i>If I had to think about someone who commits violence against women I think about a common person</i>				
No	100,0	97,9	98,9	0,010
Yes		2,1	1,1	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	
<i>The main cause of violence against women is poverty</i>				
No	98,7	95,3	97,0	0,030
Yes	1,3	4,7	3,0	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	
<i>The main cause of violence against women is unemployment</i>				
No	98,2	94,0	96,1	0,020
Yes	1,8	6,0	3,9	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	
<i>I talk about the phenomenon of violence against women with my friends</i>				
No	67,4	77,3	72,4	0,020
Yes	32,6	22,7	27,6	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	
<i>I talk about the phenomenon of violence against women with my teachers</i>				
No	60,8	51,1	55,9	0,040
Yes	39,2	48,9	44,1	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	

Agreement with the statements	<i>Socio-Economic Family Status</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>P-value</i>
	<i>Medium-Low</i>	<i>Medium-High</i>		
<i>Protection measures for women should be implemented against gender-based violence</i>				
<i>No</i>	78,4	85,4	82,0	<i>0,050</i>
<i>Yes</i>	21,6	14,6	18,0	
<i>Total</i>	100,0	100,0	100,0	

Students belonging to lower social-economic status frequently agree with the statements “violence against women is an inequitable act”, “I talk about the phenomenon of violence against women with my friends” and “protection measures for women should be implemented against gender-based violence”. In conclusion, students belonging to families with a lower SSEF align themselves to the others on more simplistic positions, while the others make less banal reflections (such as “whoever commits violence against women can be a common person”, and not a monster coming from other planets); in any case, the fact that the socioeconomic status of the family affects the general attitude towards the issue of violence against women only marginally seems to be a significant result.

Diversity

Studies on diversity allow us to grasp this phenomenon as regards its constitution and functioning, as well as the ways in which it manifests itself. Wieviorka (2002; 2008) identifies one of its distinctive features in the disruptive power and ambivalence that prevent diversity from having a unique definition, because of its very same nature¹⁰. The multi-dimensionality and multi-causality that characterise diversity contribute to this opalescence and make the operationalisation of its contents and meanings difficult, although the experience of otherness, gender in particular, represents a constant of human experience. While its conceptualisation, the way in which it is defined, the specific forms it takes (that is, its declinations), as well as the strategies adopted to deal with it change continuously, the high explanatory force of the representations that circulate in the social framework of diversity and its heuristic potential of cognitive experience remain unvaried.

Starting from these considerations, this research examined the intricate relationship between the representations that lead students to introject diversity¹¹ and the related socially shared behavioural models, weighing any

¹⁰ However numerous and qualitatively refined the differences contained in diversity may be, there will always be others that remain outside the traced boundary, just as there will be shades not imagined among those included.

¹¹ We know diversities as phenomenon that disturbs us, precisely for the fact that they ques-

specific differences in gender, age and social status. In the students' answers, some concepts that emerge confirm what has been argued, showing the effects of socialisation on the most widespread concepts of diversity. The answers to a series of statements about diversity (which of the following statements do you think best define diversity? poor/rich, white/black, man/woman, high/low, homosexual/heterosexual, native/immigrant), highlight a difference of gender: males and females essentially differ on the definitions related to the social and sexual spheres. As a matter of fact, the “poor/rich” dichotomy¹² is indicated by a percentage of females that is equal to less than half of the males percentage (14.4% against 32.7%), and it is inferior to a significant extent also in the “homosexual/heterosexual” dichotomy (F 21% against M 31%). On the contrary, it is significantly and logically greater, though not what could be expected, the females share that indicates the dichotomy “woman/man” (40.4% against 33.1%). Nevertheless, on the other dualities, there are no statistically significant differences between the two genders.

A further examination of the responses in the different areas in which the statements on diversity have been grouped up confirms the definition of diversity centred mainly on socio-cultural determinants (people are different above all because of culture 51.4%). Furthermore, the absence of statistically significant differences between the opinions expressed by pupils of secondary schools and those of high schools (verified by the significance of the relations by means of a G2 likelihood test) shows the persistence of mental schemes over time and how much problematic is their change. On the other hand, a small group of interviewees state that they do not want to express their opinion on diversity, as evidenced by the lack of answers (N.A), due to the fear of expressing their opinions or to the difficulty in knowing how to appreciate differences¹³. Overall, this attitude is ascribable to the inadequacy of focusing on a representation of oneself in relation to the “diverse” (see the items proposed), of lack of self-evaluation and development of reflective skills. A close connection between conception of diversity and operational choices emerges in the case of the answers to the question “in your opinion, diversity has to be...” (protected, tolerated,

tion the normal, obvious and taken for granted elements of the reality in which we live.

¹² Taken as a prerogative of the members of the sample, approximately 51% are first-degree students against about 28% of second-grade students. While local/immigrant is chosen as an identifying trait of diversity in about 26.5% of cases (of these 18% first grade students vs. about 31% second grade students) and that is the prerogative of 32.3% girls.

¹³ When entering this mined area it is better to do so with prudence, caution and attention. It also means remembering that no matter how numerically abundant and qualitatively refined the differences we contemplate in an attempt to broaden the concept of diversity may be, there will always be others that remain outside the boundary that we have traced, just as there will be nuances that we do not have imagined among those we have included.

cancelled, enhanced, a right, a resource, hidden, exhibited, denied”). The most popular option was that diversity has to be “cancelled” (34.6%), even if there are statistical differences and trends depending on the school level.

The difficulty -if not the unavailability- of expressing publicly and openly one’s own opinion, assuming discriminating positions and recurring to the repertoire of previous mental schemes is pointed out by scholars such as Wiewiorka (2007; 2008) and Taguieff (1994). This also happens when it comes to indicate the consequences of diversity: stereotyped and statistically insignificant opinions emerge, even depending on the level of school attended; there is a positioning that does not modulate the different organisations of the described field. Likewise, the statements on the contents of the questionnaire, in relation to aspects and problems posed by diversity, show an alignment with the feelings that circulate in the social sphere: this means that neither personal opinions appear, nor an opening towards what is different. A significant part of respondents expresses a feeling of Fear (38%) and Dread towards the diverse, mainly students from secondary school - 48% - against 33% of pupils from high school: to this, we should add the 16% that considers diversity as a Threat (about 22% from secondary school and 13% from high school)¹⁴. The polarisation recorded on the negative dimensions generated by diversity is an example of the ambivalence we referred to at the beginning of the paragraph.

These are often problematic statements that do not take into account the daily experience of diversity. It is historically accepted that diversity generates fear, which has become a trait that cuts across the current societal contexts. Bauman (2008) calls it liquid fear, indicative of a feeling that comes from everyday life and apparently banal opinions. It is an emotion that is activated independently of the presence or absence of a real threat, which guides human behaviour after having modified the perception of reality and of the expectations that guide its choices. Liquid fear, affirms Bauman, is “widespread, scattered, indistinct, free, undocked, fluctuating, devoid of a clear address or cause” (Bauman, 2008, p. 4) deriving from uncertainty, a distinctive element of today corporate context.

These interviews confirm that one of the fears which accompanies people is that of the “other”, the different, that is activated even with no specific cause, but which is related to the perception of the sense of threat directed towards oneself and one’s own stability, whose peculiarity is to activate patterns and representations learned during childhood by family education. It is important to point out the orientation of a small group that shows openness and availability towards diversity, and is represent-

¹⁴ The defensive or aggressive strategies that derive from it, aimed at mitigating fear, can be directed elsewhere to the real dangers.

ed by students who affirm their agreement with diversity that generates Openness to possibilities (13.5%) and Sense of wealth (8%). The educational level is the discriminating factor: for the first item it is 9.5% of students from secondary school and 15.4% of students from high school, and in the second item about 3% of students from secondary school and 10% of those from high schools. Who are the students who chose the answer “diversity generates a sense of wealth”? It is a more interesting option than that of the “diversity that generates openness of possibility”. There are around 30 pupils in total, 22 attend high school and 8 secondary school: this means that there is a small group of students who consider otherness something productive and positive, both for themselves and for others and, essentially, a source of wealth and development (personal and social). This choice implies a representation of otherness as vehicle of exchange, in which the subjectivities (in our case male/female) can meet and enrich each other. Even though this advanced construct is prerogative of a minority, it contains a vision oriented to overcome both the tendency to homologation and the simplistic tolerance of differences, in this latter case supported as long as they do not interfere with the socially widespread cultural model. It is a choice that focuses on a representation of the differences understood as a resource and as a possibility for the construction of a more dynamic society. In conclusion, to a negative affirmation of the role and value of diversity, namely a growing fear of diversity and the threat that this represents, corresponds a positive one, though it is less widespread: this vision is in line with the scientific concept of diversity and common sense, which recognise the pivotal role and positive value of diversity.

Whether it is what Geertz (2001, p. 89) describes as a certain optimism or a “desperate tolerance”, like the one in the UNESCO Universal Declaration of Diversity, that recognises diversity as a universal value to defend and favour (UNESCO 2001)¹⁵ or not, in any case it expresses the idea of being different from the way things are in reality and indicates a perspective of opening.

Violence against women

One of the variations of diversity is the sexual one, an issue that together with its cultural constructs is broad and difficult to summarise. According to Taguieff’s assertion on racism (1994) we can assume that it is an area similar to “a boat that we cannot steer to the harbour and that we need to (...) reconstruct between the ocean flows” (quoted in Besozzi, 1996). One of the areas where the debate led to significant results was that of the thought of sexual difference, theorized by Derrida (1997) Deleuze (1968;

¹⁵ Declaration that was issued in Paris on 2nd November 2001.

2002) and Foucault (2013)¹⁶, which deconstructs the traditional, universal form in which the human race is conceived. Luce Irigaray has mostly the same thought (2007): in the essay “Beyond one’s own borders”, she holds that sexual difference represents one of the problems or the problem that we have to address in our age and a fundamental point in the social reproduction of the disadvantage of being a woman, which stems from everyday life and apparently banal things and opinions. The risk of the daily construction of stereotypes based on gender diversity becomes more and more realistic, as the symbolic fruitfulness of sexual difference is not recognised as a value. The issue is not about cancelling the differences by pursuing equality, as:

“Asking for equality, as women, seems to me a wrong expression for a real goal. Asking to be equal presupposes a term of comparison. To whom or what do women want to be made equal? To men? To a salary? To a public job? Equal to which model? Why not equal to themselves? A sufficiently rigorous analysis of the claims of equality shows that they are well founded at the level of a superficial criticism of society, but utopian as a means of liberating women. The exploitation of women is based on sexual difference and can only be solved through sexual difference. [...] The human species is divided into two genders, which ensure its production and reproduction. [...] The important thing is to define values of belonging to a gender for both. It is essential to develop a culture of sexuality, which does not exist yet, respecting of the two genders” (Irigaray, 1979, p. 44).

The fact that the concept of diversity (as a value) is not widespread legitimates the abuse of power and amplifies the risk of violence: according to the statistics, there has been a constant increase in the violence of men against women¹⁷. In this research we deemed essential highlighting the idea that people have about violence against women. Being young people, this is very important because the ideas and meanings assigned to them determine reality. This urged us to investigate the ways in which the conception of violence and its characteristics are structured in the context of the interviewed sample. A section of the questionnaire was dedicated to investigate the idea that young people have about violence and those involved in an act of violence (women who suffer it and men who perpetrate it). The answers to this set of questions show that, according to

¹⁶ The philosophy of sexual difference “deconstructs” the traditional, universal form in which mankind is conceived. Derrida, in particular, highlights the diversity through the “deconstruction” of the meanings contained in the written word, while Foucault describes differences through the reasoning which, in the modern age, affirms itself as identity, excluding the “different self” - therefore the difference -, as *déraison*, that is non-reasoning, alienation.

¹⁷ It is worth highlighting that the Italian context is different from other European and non-European countries.

the interviewees, violence is a problem that not only concerns those who suffer it, but affects men and women without any distinctions. The analysis of the answers to the question “Do you think violence against women is a problem that concerns...” (Table 3) shows that gender violence is considered a problem for men and women as a whole. A compact group of 80% of the sample chose this response without statistically significant differences with respect to gender and age.

Table 3 - Percentage distribution of the interviewed subjects on the basis of the opinion expressed regarding the question “Do you think that violence against women is a problem or a fact that concerns”, by school grade

<i>School grade</i>	<i>Do you think that violence against women is a problem or a fact that concerns</i>				<i>Total</i>		<i>P-value</i>
	<i>Only women</i>	<i>Only men</i>	<i>Both men and women</i>	<i>None of them</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	
<i>Secondary School</i>	15,5	2,7	81,1	0,7	100,0	148	0,258
<i>High School</i>	12,0	5,5	80,6	1,9	100,0	309	
<i>Total</i>	13,1	4,6	80,7	1,5	100,0	457	

The unanimity of evaluation would show the acquisition of the awareness of men and women as recipients of equal rights, a perspective that involves the assumption of the universality of rights and, therefore, the overcoming of the conceptions of disadvantage and subordination of women. But is the recorded data really an appreciation of the differences or is it a formal choice? Further investigation reveals that respondents' assessment changes when they are asked to evaluate the act of violence against women: for males it is an unfair act while women show indignation and choose two *tranchant* definitions as an intolerable act (F. 63% vs. 43% M) and unjustifiable (F 64% vs. 50% M). For a more detailed and meaningful analysis of the data referring to the attitude towards violence against women, an ad hoc variable was constructed by appropriately grouping the answers of the question “How do you feel when you know that a woman or a girl has been object of violence?”. The aggregation of the responses was carried out by defining three distinct modalities, namely disappointed, indifferent, not disappointed:

- In the “disappointed” group the items that converge are: An injustice is happening; It is unfair that the strongest has the power; Other (look at the specifications).

- In the “indifferent” group the items that converge are: I remain indifferent; N.A.
- In the “not disappointed” the items that converge are: I think that it is natural that the strongest commands; I feel satisfied.

Among the indifferent ones, the students between 14 and 15 years are more compared to the other two modalities, while younger students are less. The aggregate variable was analysed in relation with the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents both in the most correct methodological sense (observing how gender, school and age group are distributed according to the attitude) and also in the opposite sense, namely observing the percentage distribution of the gender, school or age groups in each attitude mode. Table 4 shows that the proportion of disappointed students, in some way from facts of violence, amounts to almost all of the sample (95%), which is a common attitude among girls in particular (though three girls show themselves indifferent to the problem and two even give justifications); the minimum value pointed out by subjects that do not respond to the gender classification refers to few cases to have a statistical confirmation.

Table 4 - Percentage distribution of the interviewed subjects on the basis of the attitude towards violence against women by gender and on the basis of gender for the attitude towards violence against women.

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Attitude towards facts of violence against women</i>			<i>Total</i>	<i>P-value</i>
	<i>Disappointed</i>	<i>Indifferent</i>	<i>Not disappointed</i>		
<i>Male</i>	93,5	5,2	1,2	100,0	0,068
<i>Female</i>	97,4	1,5	1,0	100,0	
<i>N.A.</i>	88,2	5,9	5,9	100,0	
Total %	95,0	3,7	1,3	100,0	

In the whole analysis there are no relevant territorial differences, except for a secondary school in Bari where there is a considerable degree of indifference to the facts of violence against women. Statistically significant differences emerge between the distribution by attitude to the facts of violence against women, according to both the perception of how frequent it is and the three modalities previously identified: students of the group of those who remain indifferent are convinced that this kind of violence is not that frequent¹⁸, while those of the group of disappointed and not disappointed have a completely different opinion (Table 5).

¹⁸ Just one of the interviewees.

Table 5 - Percentage distribution of respondents by attitude towards facts of violence against women, on the basis of the answer to the question “In your opinion, how frequent are episodes of violence against women?”

<i>Attitude towards episodes of violence against women</i>	<i>In your opinion, how frequent are episodes of violence against women?</i>					<i>Total</i>		<i>P-value</i>
	<i>Very often</i>	<i>Quite often</i>	<i>Not that often</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>N.A.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	
<i>Disappointed</i>	41,4	55,4	2,7	0,2	0,2	100,0	437	0,025
<i>Indifferent</i>	5,9	76,5	11,8	0,0	5,9	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	33,3	50,0	16,7	0,0	0,0	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	40,0	56,1	3,3	0,2	0,4	100,0	460	

The last part of the questionnaire included a series of questions useful to quantify the level of agreement or disagreement of the interviewed subjects regarding a series of statements on violence against women. Students were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement using a 6-step Likert scale (Total agreement = 1; Total disagreement = 6) on a series of items. The general tendency to choose the level of maximum disagreement (level 6 on the Likert scale) is confirmed, the items involved were: Sometimes there are circumstances that justify sexual violence (63.5%); We cannot speak of sexual violence if it occurs between husband and wife (62.6%); If a man is rejected by his wife it is understandable that he can react violently (57.8%); There may be circumstances that justify the physical violence of the husband towards his wife (59.3%); If a friend reports that she is often abused it is better to play down (55.0%); I think it is always better not to intervene in case of violence (62.2%); A united family is better, even if in it there is violence, rather than a family with separated parents (60.2%). Among all, the only item that generally expresses a certain degree of tolerance is the one concerning the occurrence of an act of violence: “Between a man and a woman there might be a slap without the actual intention of hurting” finds a considerable degree of agreement (namely 50.6% of the total who gave a response from 1 to 3 on the Likert scale) as if to say that an act of violence can be tolerated if not perpetrated over time. It is precisely on this item that significant differences are found in relation to the age classes: while the frequencies have a fair distribution on the six levels of the Likert scale, pupils belonging to the age group 16-18 years seem to differ from the general trend and are mostly concentrated (32% of cases) on the second level of the scale. If we look at the items mentioned above in detail, we can see that the most numerous group, namely the one of those who disagree, in line with the characteristics of this

category of young people, polarizes the answers towards a considerable degree of disagreement with percentages exceeding 60% in most of the items.

Furthermore, those who show indifference towards the acts seem to be equally distributed, but they clearly deviate from the general tendency to concentrate on the level of maximum disagreement. In this group of young people, the most significant percentages of disagreement around 30% and we find them in items such as “sometimes there are circumstances that justify sexual violence” or “we cannot speak about violence if it occurs between husband and wife”: this is a clear sign of the fact that they are young people with a strong prejudice rooted in the idea of women’s submission. The analysis of the items reports a considerable degree of agreement of this group of young people, even compared to the other categories of students, and confirms not only the general indifference towards the problem of violence against women, but also the strong rooting of the idea that there are situations in which the problem can be tolerated: Sometimes there are circumstances that justify sexual violence (17.6% fully agree); Between a man and a woman there might be a slap without the actual intention of hurting (23.5% fully agreed); If a friend reports that she is often abused, it is better to play down (23.5% fully agreed); I think it is always better not to intervene in the case of violence (17.6% fully agreed).

Table 6 - Percentage distribution of the interviewed subjects according to the level of agreement with each of the following statements, for attitude towards violence to women

(Level of agreement based on the scale: Total agreement-1; Total disagreement-6)

<i>Attitude towards episodes of violence against women</i>	<i>Percentage distribution of the interviewed subjects according to the level of agreement with each of the following statements</i>							<i>Total</i>		<i>P-value</i>
	1	2	3	4	5	6	N.R.	%	N	
<i>Sometimes there are circumstances that justify sexual violence</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	5,5	3,7	4,6	5,3	14,9	65,0	1,1	100,0	437	0,038
<i>Indifferent</i>	17,6	5,9	29,4	11,8	5,9	29,4	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	0,0	0,0	16,7	16,7	16,7	50,0	0,0	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	5,9	3,7	5,7	5,7	14,6	63,5	1,1	100,0	460	
<i>Between a man and a woman there might be a slap without the actual intention of hurting</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	14,9	16,9	17,6	13,0	20,4	15,6	1,6	100,0	437	0,458
<i>Indifferent</i>	23,5	35,3	11,8	11,8	11,8	5,9	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	16,7	33,3	33,3	16,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	15,2	17,8	17,6	13,0	19,8	15,0	1,5	100,0	460	

<i>Attitude towards episodes of violence against women</i>	<i>Percentage distribution of the interviewed subjects according to the level of agreement with each of the following statements</i>							<i>Total</i>		<i>P-value</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>N.R.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	
<i>We cannot speak about sexual violence if it occurs between husband and wife</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	3,9	4,8	5,5	7,8	12,1	64,1	1,8	100,0	437	0,071
<i>Indifferent</i>	5,9	17,6	17,6	5,9	17,6	35,3	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	50,0	33,3	16,7	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	3,9	5,2	5,9	7,6	12,8	62,6	2,0	100,0	460	
<i>If a man is rejected by his wife it is understandable that he can react violently</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	3,7	4,8	5,5	10,3	14,9	59,5	1,4	100,0	437	0,189
<i>Indifferent</i>	5,9	11,8	11,8	17,6	23,5	29,4	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	0,0	33,3	0,0	16,7	33,3	16,7	0,0	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	3,7	5,4	5,7	10,7	15,4	57,8	1,3	100,0	460	
<i>There may be circumstances that justify the physical violence of the husband towards his wife</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	4,6	3,4	7,3	6,4	15,8	61,1	1,4	100,0	437	0,001
<i>Indifferent</i>	0,0	23,5	35,3	11,8	5,9	23,5	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	0,0	0,0	16,7	0,0	33,3	33,3	16,7	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	4,3	4,1	8,5	6,5	15,7	59,3	1,5	100,0	460	
<i>If a friend reports that she is often abused, it is better to play down</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	5,5	4,1	6,9	8,0	16,5	57,2	1,8	100,0	437	0,005
<i>Indifferent</i>	23,5	5,9	11,8	17,6	35,3	5,9	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	16,7	0,0	0,0	16,7	16,7	33,3	16,7	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	6,3	4,1	7,0	8,5	17,2	55,0	2,0	100,0	460	
<i>I think it is always better not to intervene in the case of violence</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	6,4	3,7	4,3	5,9	14,2	64,1	1,4	100,0	437	0,055
<i>Indifferent</i>	17,6	5,9	5,9	17,6	29,4	23,5	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	0,0	33,3	0,0	16,7	16,7	33,3	0,0	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	6,7	4,1	4,3	6,5	14,8	62,2	1,3	100,0	460	
<i>A united family is better, even if in it there is violence, rather than a family with separated parents</i>										
<i>Disappointed</i>	3,9	4,1	5,7	6,2	16,9	61,6	1,6	100,0	437	0,136
<i>Indifferent</i>	17,6	0,0	17,6	11,8	17,6	35,3	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Not disappointed</i>	0,0	0,0	16,7	0,0	50,0	33,3	0,0	100,0	6	
<i>Total</i>	4,3	3,9	6,3	6,3	17,4	60,2	1,5	100,0	460	

When it comes to analyse the answers related to the main causes of violence against women according to young people, it is worth noticing that the highest number of preferences (48%) is attributed to an exogenous cause: therefore, the use of alcohol or drugs would generate violent behaviours. In the ranking, the second preference (34%) is that the cause of the violence lies in the way in which men consider women, thus attributing a strong responsibility to cultural factors pertaining to the sphere of masculine and feminine. On the same line there is the prejudice against women in a negative sense: with a percentage amounting to 27%, some students attribute to women the responsibility to provoke violent attitudes due to the way they dress, that can be provocative, or to the fact that they go out alone. Lastly, among the other causes there are the greater autonomy of women, which would cause problems of acceptance by men (22%) and the lack of values (22%) of those who carry out violent acts.

The peculiarity of this statistical distribution is the presence, even if very low, of students who answered “I do not know” to the question about the causes of violence (5,9%): among those who gave this answer, students from secondary school are more compared to students who attend high school. If we look more closely at the level of agreement or disagreement of the interviewees regarding a further series of statements on violence, the analysis of the responses through the gender variable indicates that female students reject in a much clearer way than men any idea that violence may be justified or that there may even be any attempt to attribute some responsibility for the violent act to women. It is a result that can be deduced from the percentages (all higher than 70%) concerning the highest degree of disagreement (level 6 on the Likert scale) expressed in the items “A woman feels more fulfilled as a female if her man is rude and violent”, “Sometimes there are circumstances that justify sexual violence”, “We cannot speak about sexual violence if it occurs between husband and wife”, “If a man is rejected by his wife it is understandable that he can react violently”, “There may be circumstances that justify the physical violence of the husband against his wife”, “If a friend reports that she is often abused it is better to play down”, “I think it is always better not to intervene in case of violence”, “A united family is better, even if in it there is violence, rather than a family with separated parents”.

Given the high degree of opposition expressed by the girls, it is surprising that the values of disagreement fall (12.8%) with reference to the statement that refers to self-defence: “If a woman does not want to have a sexual relationship she has many ways to defend herself” and, indeed, girls agree to a large extent with this statement (14.4% level 1). Male students show their disagreement less sharply towards the problem of violence, expressed through the adherence to the expressions reported in the items; the percentages that refer to the highest level of dissent (level 6) reach a maximum of 56% (related

to the item “We cannot speak about sexual violence between husband and wife”) or 50% (related to the statements “I think it is always better not to intervene in cases of violence” and “Sometimes there are circumstances that justify sexual violence”). It is worth noticing that even for boys the statement “If a woman does not want to have a sexual relationship she has many ways to defend herself” reaches high levels of agreement (17.7%); adding this trend to the high degree of agreement (level 1 with a percentage of 12.1%) to the item “If a woman does not react to violence means she likes it”, we can argue that in boys there is a greater tendency to empower the victim in the act of violence. With reference to the age-related variable, there is a departure from the general trend of pupils belonging to the 16-18 age group who appear concentrated (32% of cases) on the second level of the scale. In conclusion, the sample is characterised by age class and gender with statistically significant differences for the statement “Between a man and a woman there might be a slap without the actual intention of hurting. As already noted in the analysis by school level, the students who attend high school always position themselves, on the highest level of the evaluation scale, or nearly, that is the one of maximum disagreement. There are also males that express total agreement (18,5%), partial agreement (20,2%) or agreement (21,2%) with the statement according to which a slap is not violence.

Table 7 - Percentage distribution of respondents according to the level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements, by gender. (Level of agreement or disagreement graded according to the scale: Total Agreement: 1; Total Disagreement: 6)

Gender	<i>Percentage distribution of respondents according to the level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements</i>							Total		P-value
	1	2	3	4	5	6	N.A.	%	N	
<i>Sexual violence is a problem that affects only attractive and showy women</i>										
<i>Male</i>	8,9	10,5	20,6	14,9	15,3	28,2	1,6	100,0	248	0,000
<i>Female</i>	3,6	4,1	9,2	8,7	25,6	48,2	0,5	100,0	195	
<i>N.A.</i>	0,0	17,6	23,5	23,5	5,9	29,4	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Total</i>	6,3	8,0	15,9	12,6	19,3	36,7	1,1	100,0	460	
<i>If there are no signs of physical violence, we cannot talk about sexual violence</i>										
<i>Male</i>	8,1	9,7	15,7	10,5	12,1	41,5	2,4	100,0	248	0,074
<i>Female</i>	6,7	6,7	12,8	11,8	13,3	48,2	0,5	100,0	195	
<i>N.A.</i>	17,6	5,9	5,9	35,3	0,0	35,3	0,0	100,0	17	
<i>Total</i>	7,8	8,3	14,1	12,0	12,2	44,1	1,5	100,0	460	

Gender	Percentage distribution of respondents according to the level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements							Total		P-value
	1	2	3	4	5	6	N.A.	%	N	
<i>If a woman does not want to have a sexual relationship, she has many ways to defend herself</i>										
Male	17,7	18,1	23,8	17,3	12,1	8,5	2,4	100,0	248	0,006
Female	14,4	10,3	16,9	21,0	23,6	12,8	1,0	100,0	195	
N.A.	11,8	5,9	23,5	41,2	5,9	5,9	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	16,1	14,3	20,9	19,8	16,7	10,2	2,0	100,0	460	
<i>Virtuous women do not run the risk of being raped</i>										
Male	5,6	8,5	12,5	10,1	24,6	34,7	4,0	100,0	248	0,000
Female	4,1	1,5	4,1	9,2	12,8	67,7	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	5,9	5,9	23,5	0,0	17,6	41,2	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	5,0	5,4	9,3	9,3	19,3	48,9	2,6	100,0	460	
<i>If a woman does not react to sexual violence it means that she likes it</i>										
Male	12,1	8,9	12,5	12,5	14,1	36,7	3,2	100,0	248	0,000
Female	4,6	3,6	6,7	3,6	16,4	63,1	2,1	100,0	195	
N.A.	11,8	5,9	5,9	17,6	0,0	52,9	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	8,9	6,5	9,8	8,9	14,6	48,5	2,8	100,0	460	
<i>A woman feels more fulfilled as a female if her man is rude and violent</i>										
Male	6,0	2,8	15,3	12,9	15,3	46,0	1,6	100,0	248	0,000
Female	2,6	2,1	2,6	5,1	8,7	78,5	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	11,8	0,0	0,0	5,9	0,0	76,5	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	4,8	2,4	9,3	9,3	12,0	60,9	1,3	100,0	460	
<i>Sometimes there are circumstances that justify sexual violence</i>										
Male	6,9	6,0	8,9	6,5	16,9	53,2	1,6	100,0	248	0,000
Female	4,1	1,0	2,1	4,6	11,3	76,4	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	11,8	0,0	0,0	5,9	17,6	64,7	0,0	100,0	17	
Total	5,9	3,7	5,7	5,7	14,6	63,5	1,1	100,0	460	
<i>Between a man and a woman there might be a slap without the actual intention of hurting</i>										
Male	18,5	20,2	21,0	12,5	15,3	10,1	2,4	100,0	248	0,003
Female	11,3	14,4	13,3	14,4	24,6	21,5	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	11,8	23,5	17,6	5,9	29,4	11,8	0,0	100,0	17	
Total	15,2	17,8	17,6	13,0	19,8	15,0	1,5	100,0	460	

Gender	Percentage distribution of respondents according to the level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements							Total		P-value
	1	2	3	4	5	6	N.A.	%	N	
<i>We cannot speak about sexual violence if it occurs between husband and wife</i>										
Male	4,0	6,9	8,5	9,3	12,5	56,0	2,8	100,0	248	0,005
Female	4,1	3,1	2,6	5,1	11,8	72,8	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	0,0	5,9	5,9	11,8	29,4	41,2	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	3,9	5,2	5,9	7,6	12,8	62,6	2,0	100,0	460	
<i>If a man is rejected by his wife it is understandable that he can react violently</i>										
Male	4,8	7,3	7,7	11,7	19,4	47,2	2,0	100,0	248	0,001
Female	2,1	3,6	3,1	8,2	10,8	71,8	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	5,9	0,0	5,9	23,5	11,8	52,9	0,0	100,0	17	
Total	3,7	5,4	5,7	10,7	15,4	57,8	1,3	100,0	460	
<i>There may be circumstances that justify physical violence of an husband against his wife</i>										
Male	4,4	5,6	12,9	8,9	17,3	48,8	2,0	100,0	248	0,000
Female	3,6	2,6	1,5	4,1	14,4	73,3	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	11,8	0,0	23,5	0,0	5,9	52,9	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	4,3	4,1	8,5	6,5	15,7	59,3	1,5	100,0	460	
<i>If a friend reports that she is often abused, it is better to play down</i>										
Male	7,7	5,2	8,1	12,5	20,6	43,1	2,8	100,0	248	0,000
Female	4,6	3,1	5,1	3,1	13,3	70,3	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	5,9		11,8	11,8	11,8	52,9	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	6,3	4,1	7,0	8,5	17,2	55,0	2,0	100,0	460	
<i>I think it is always better not to intervene in the case of violence</i>										
Male	7,7	6,9	6,5	6,9	16,9	53,6	1,6	100,0	248	0,000
Female	6,2	0,0	2,1	6,7	12,3	72,3	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	0,0	11,8	0,0	0,0	11,8	70,6	5,9	100,0	17	
Total	6,7	4,1	4,3	6,5	14,8	62,2	1,3	100,0	460	
<i>A united family is better, even if in it there is violence, rather than a family with separated parents</i>										
Male	4,4	5,2	9,7	8,5	21,8	48,0	2,4	100,0	248	0,000
Female	4,1	2,6	1,5	3,1	11,3	76,9	0,5	100,0	195	
N.A.	5,9	0,0	11,8	11,8	23,5	47,1	0,0	100,0	17	
Total	4,3	3,9	6,3	6,3	17,4	60,2	1,5	100,0	460	

Conclusion

The route toward diversity cannot be approached without engaging with several crucial sociological debates, regarding power distribution and human interactions. Especially, since diversity, according to Touraine (2009, p. 16), forces us to confront the question on “how to combine diversity with the unity of a collective life” and the notion that “difference is a behavior not accepted and not shared by the majority.” (Santambrogio, 2003, p. 121). This is evident, by what can be perceived as society’s resistance, prejudice, or even mistrust toward diversity, as well as the many acts of exclusion and discrimination still present today. Furthermore, this resistance is manifested not only in the sphere of the production of knowledge but also in the perpetuation of the lack of information, and the mechanisms used for the socialization and communication of the discourses around diversity (Bovone, 2014; Bovone & Ruggerone, 2006).

In this regard, Goffman (1969; 1987) argues that *diversity* requires a process of activate cultural production, and reconstruction of social interactions. In other words, diversity must be recognized intentionally as a collective goal for healthy and sustainable human interactions. Furthermore, it is imperative to engage with the processes involved in the managing of diversity and the political claims used around the discourses of identity, the recognition of different, and the coexistence to multiple identities.

As discussed in this paper, prejudice against difference, moves and exists, beyond the promotion of marginalization or social exclusion, as it also creates isolation and perpetuates ignorance, in this case, the lack of information and the transferring of false and incomplete data. As this research shown, the discourses around gender among High School students were complex and they evolved overtime. The apparent homogeneity of opinions expressed by the students about male-female interactions were not fixed, and they gradually changed into more embracing and complex frameworks.

It was a matter of overcoming the defensive barrier that each of us sets when asked to explain thoughts and opinions on a delicate subject for which there are discursive forms, which are shared with the pressure to comply with them. In particular, it is important to underline how the low presence of high levels of prejudicial attitudes, highlighted with the first data distribution, has become evident with the construction of the aggregate variable and with the processing of the SSEF variable and its influence on the opinions expressed by the interviewees. The result was the confirmation of the dilemmatic and ambivalent structure of gender diversity, typical of the discursive everyday life that is lost when it comes to act and react. In other words, young people participate extensively in the ambiguity and anxiety they encounter in the everyday relationship with otherness. In our analy-

sis, there is an explanation of how mental schemes operate in relation to gender diversity as described by Wieviorka (2008), who refers to unstable connections of disorganised beliefs and opinions that coexist without ever defining themselves according to a typical-ideal linearity. These attitudes are correlated, on the one hand, “to the expression of differences that manifest themselves in public spaces” and to the consequent claim of rights, and on the other hand “to the existence of discrimination” determined by the misunderstanding or rejection of diversity itself. The answers to the questions, in particular those structured according to the Likert scale, clearly show how respondents fluctuate between openness and closure, between tolerance and intolerance, between the opinions of men and those of women.

The sharing of the items that express a rejection of violence that more or less explicitly imply gender equality is particularly widespread in all the subjects with very little gender differentiation. The adhesion or rejection of those items that refer to real and concrete behaviours in which an idea of a man-woman relationship is expressed, defined in asymmetrical terms or ways, is much less numerically consistent. In this case the differences between boys and girls are more consistent, like saying that “between saying and doing there is the sea”. As a generic effect of awareness campaigns and an overall attitude of today’s society in favour of women and the refusal of any form of violence against them, expressing generic attitudes of sharing and supporting these ideas has become relatively easy. However, it has become less so to concretely recognize that the violence between a man and a woman originates in the power relationship that culturally defines and establishes the emotional relationships between men and women, while also governing their relationships within the family. It is therefore important to think of actions that try to work more directly and explicitly on this part of the problem.

Even though gender equality is included in the Ministry’s programmes (see Law 107/2015 better known as Buona Scuola¹⁹), respondents have rarely addressed the topic at school except in episodic ad-hoc experimental projects (see the Educoridi-Bari project) for which they continue to use the family constructs. As a matter of fact, family is one of the most representative spaces in which routines are repeated, in which the schemes and the automatisms are repeated, in which the taken for granted is the same for everyone and that reassures against the anxieties and the anguish generated by whatever brings havoc to everyday experiences. We would need spaces where young people can experience significant changes, where the disarray of the change of approach to gender does not produce anxiety. Berger

¹⁹ The law under Article 17 No. 1 refers to the prevention of school dropout, all forms of discrimination and bullying, including information technology.

and Luckmann (1969) are right, probably, when they argue that what poses problems of practical nature to the social order is rejected, as it undermines the consolidated common sense, questioning what is obvious, the taken for granted, namely the common fabric on which the individual relationships are structured, as well as the basic concepts of reality and knowledge (of the superiority of the male). Schools are called upon to support and promote not only the development of individual identity, but also gender differences, as the forms of knowledge that are developed in a particular society depend on the variety and forms of experience typical of that society: knowledge teaches individuals to decipher diversity, fear, etc. and the legitimacy to exist, opening to an experience that always belongs to a group and is forged by that experience (Turnaturi, 1995).

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