



Children`s Voices

Interethnic Violence
in the School Environment

Edited by: **Zorana Medarić and Mateja Sedmak**

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Educational Institutions in the Face of Multiculturalism: Problems and Solutions to Interethnic Violence in Italian Schools

GIOVANNI DELLI ZOTTI AND ORNELLA URPIS

Introduction

The Italian situation is rather complex in terms of its ethnic and linguistic composition. In fact, in addition to people arriving in Italy as part of recent immigrations, indigenous national minorities and several other ethnic and/or linguistic groups are also present. At school level, this is reflected in the presence, in some regions, of schools where teaching is carried out in the languages of national minorities or so-called local autochthonous groups, the most recent legislation has introduced optional teaching of local cultures and languages. Finally, Italy has experienced, during the first post war decades, a huge internal migration that brought thousands of new immigrants to the north of Italy, mainly from the south of Italy. These “ethnic” groups maintain ties with their languages and cultures of origin by means of creating cultural circles and realising various initiatives, but we may consider them as well established in the territory – to the point that it is hard, nowadays, to find episodes that may be clearly attributed to interethnic relations among these groups.

Thus, in the Italian version of the research on interethnic violence in the school environment, it has been decided to record any kind of cultural and linguistic self-identification. However, the analysis has been limited to the interactions between Italian and non-Italian pupils, the latter further being subdivided into Europeans and non-Europeans, with reference to the country of origin.

Concerning the present description of the research results, we may say that “institutions” is somehow the catchword that will accompany the reader throughout the presentation. As will be seen, the pupils interviewed by means of the structured questionnaire as well as those who participated in the focus groups appear to be quite confident and feel that they inhabit a protected environment when they are in school; they also feel that they can rely on their teachers. We may say that pupils have a true picture in the sense that Italian legislation and, consequently, the Italian school system, as will be illustrated in the first part of the present work, do actually take care of the problem of the presence in schools and classes of non-Italian pupils, primarily children of recently immigrated families.

Thus it is not by chance the chapter concludes with an example of “good practice” that was recently introduced in the Region of origin of the Italian research group (Friuli Venezia Giulia); one that, needless to say, consists in a Memorandum of Agreement between several local institutions aiming at addressing the phenomenon of bullying.

Immigration: Challenges and Changes in Italian Society

CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY

Citizenship is one of the founding principles of contemporary society and the heart of the concept of democracy and national identity. The classic concept of citizenship remains the one formulated by the economist T. H. Marshall (1976): a set of rights that belong to every citizen, whatever his or her wealth and social position. In Marshall’s vision, the development of citizenship consisted in the gradual expansion of these rights (from civil to political and, finally, social rights) to ever-wider layers of the population.

It should be noted that citizenship is a problematic and in some respects a controversial right because on the one hand it binds individuals within a political community while on the other it excludes those who do not belong to it. In many countries today, there are important social groups to whom full participation

in political life is denied. They are not entitled to exercise real rights due to their social, cultural and economic exclusion, which establishes a condition of “differentiated citizenship”; that is to say, they suffer a different type of exclusion, according to a different type of cultural belonging (Kymlicka, 1995). This is the case with those immigrant workers for whom Italian citizenship is not easily achieved (to be euphemistic); almost no matter for how many years they have lived and worked in the country. This also occurs to the children of immigrants from whom the same duties are required as from others but whose identification with the institutions of the state in which they were born (Italy), or in which they have lived for a long time, is problematic. Citizenship, in fact, occurs when people share to a large extent the same culture, institutions as well as a common “destiny”; on the other hand, multiple identification connected with belonging to a different cultural backgrounds, socialisation in different environments (school, family, peer group) and the denial of recognition of citizenship, causes young people to not develop a full anchor to institutions and their symbols and may become a source of tension and divergence (Cammarosano and Urpis, 2012).

As for cultural diversity, at enrolment, schools collect data regarding the citizenship of pupils and not regarding their “nationality”, which is a more complex – possibly Janus-faced – concept. On the one hand, nationality overlaps with citizenship and indicates membership of a certain state. But it can also mean membership in a “national” or ethno-cultural group living within a state whose majority belongs to another culture. As an ethno-cultural concept, nationality is opposed to the “political” concept of citizenship and implies, at least in some cases, the possibility of individual and collective choice.

The field research conducted in Italy showed that some pupils, when faced by the question: “what is your nationality” (in the sense of ethnic background, not citizenship), often wonder about the meaning of this word. In some instances, although both parents were of foreign origin – and thus the children have been enrolled as “non-Italians” – they answered: “Italian”. The situation is even more confused when parents are from two different foreign countries or one is Italian and the other has a foreign origin. In other cases pupils are well aware of their nationality. For example, they answered: “I am Serbian”. But then they added: “But I do not know if I am Italian, so maybe my citizenship is Italian; but I am Serbian”, finally asking: “What must I write in the questionnaire?” Notwithstanding, it has been decided to use “nationality” as the auto-identification concept, since the problem would have not been solved if we had instead used the expression “cultural background” in the questionnaire, a phrase whose meaning is not understandable to many people, especially children.

Citizenship has instead been not used as a means for auto-identification because it would have created awkward issues for the analysis of results. In high schools (4th year) there are many young adults who were born abroad but who applied for and obtained Italian citizenship. They would have correctly defined themselves as Italians, notwithstanding their sometimes-different cultural and physical traits. Moreover, many pupils coming from India and Africa, Moldova and Ukraine may be still culturally quite different, even though they are in all respects Italian citizens due to the fact that they had been recently adopted by an Italian family. It must be remembered that adoption in Italy is a fairly widespread practice. In terms of interpreting paradoxical results it may be useful to report what happened at “Cosser” School in Gorizia, where the teacher asked one of the researchers to identify all non-Italian children in the class: all those listed by the researcher as non-Italian because of their dark skin and/or facial traits were in fact Italians (adopted), while three others who were similar to “us” in every visible aspect, were not (they remained citizens of Kosovo). Therefore, the same pupil may, for example: (a) be an Italian citizen for the purposes of the school, (b) identify himself as Serbian, and (c) be categorised as a “foreigner” (having a different ethnic background) or an “Italian” by the teacher, depending on perceptions and knowledge.

A problem finally arises as regards the collective name used to describe pupils having a substantially different ethnic background, given that this expression is not appropriate to the scope of the study. Defining them in this way would be misleading since it might imply the exclusion from the group of Italians of all those pupils who belong to internal cultural minorities (Friulians, for example); therefore, it was decided to simply treat them as Italians, not being perceived as “different” and thus not being in any way potential actors in any interethnic conflicts.

In Italian scientific literature, in official statistics and also in documents of the NGOs responsible for taking care of the immigrant populations residing in Italy, people not having Italian citizenship, no matter how long they have been permanently residing in Italy, are called “foreign” – a term that, at least in Italy, simply describes a factual situation and has no particular negative connotation. Realising that the term has, or possibly may have, a negative connotation in other countries, we have decided to define pupils with a different ethnic background as “non-Italians”, even if this, as we have seen, does not solve all the problems (e.g. regarding adopted children). “Non-Italian” anyway correctly defines EU27 citizens: they are clearly not Italians, but at the same time not really “foreign”, sharing with Italians their European citizenship. Of course, when using statistical sources or transcripts from focus groups or interviews, we are not entitled to “censor” the words originally used.

ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY, MULTICULTURALISM AND INTERCULTURALISM

As with other status groups (in Weber's sense), definitions fall along a continuum between two poles (objective and subjective). Objective definitions regard ethnicity as a set of observable traits (language, culture, race, ancestry, etc.), while subjective definitions are (self)categorisations that may be simply described in terms of a general (or generic) sense of belonging. Subjective definitions blur the concept of ethnicity in terms of ethnic identity, a very inclusive categorisation that comprises cognitive, evaluative and affective aspects (Tajfel, 1981) producing separation and aggregation into categories defined in terms of "we" and "they" (Epstein, 1978). This process is particularly important in the context of the present research project, where concepts of ethnic identity are especially fluid due to both the setting and the young age of the subjects. Moreover, categorisation produces evaluations that can be positive (valuations) or negative (devaluations), depending mainly on the source of the evaluation (Chun, 1983): auto-categorisation will lead almost invariably to a positive evaluation, while an externally imposed categorisation will be usually lead to a devaluation.

Multiculturalism is an ethical and political orientation that provides "recognition" to cultural communities, considered as collective subjects; as such, it goes beyond traditional liberalism that recognises only individual rights (Habermas and Taylor, 1998). Hence, multicultural policies are designed to defend and promote rights that are specific to each cultural group. However, the defence/promotion of the (collective) rights of a cultural group might collide with the defence/promotion of the (individual) rights of their members. Moreover, it would create plural and separate citizenships, collapsing an "open" society into a multiplicity of "closed" societies (Savidan, 2010). This is why many of those who appreciate cultural diversity from a perspective of integration rather than separation prefer to speak of interculturalism: an ethical and political project aimed at solving the problems of coexistence between cultural groups by promoting a constant communication and an active cooperation between them. "Multiculturalism suggests a static situation... a mere coexistence between groups of different origins... interculturalism indicates a situation of mutual exchange and of understanding, resulting in cultural enrichment of both society and the single groups" (Marazzi, 1998, 180-1). Interculturalism, primarily applied in education, thus requires the abandonment of all forms of dogmatism and indicates a propensity to draw the best from other cultures.

IMMIGRATION IN ITALY

Immigration is characterised by high dynamism and a strong “submersed” component; it is therefore necessary to employ a variety of statistical sources that only taken together can provide a complete knowledge of the phenomenon. For regular immigration, a major source consists in the counting of residence permits; the Italian Institute of Statistics (Istat) instead collects registrations to each municipality, producing statistics on migratory movements, broken down by gender and citizenship.

Both sources, however, underestimate the data, since most minors are reported only on the residence permits of their parents; moreover, since 2007 the citizens of EU27 member states are exempted from applying for a residence permit, even if they plan to stay in Italy more than three months. Paramount importance is thus to be attributed to the estimates of the Scientific Committee of Caritas/Migrantes on migrant populations that are regularly present, and to statistics concerning newly registered workers, provided by Inail (National institute for Insurance against accidents at work).

The population of migrants resident in Italy has grown very large, especially over the last few years (Table 1). This growth is such that migrants' share of the total Italian population has almost doubled in less than ten years, from 4.1% at the end of 2004 to 7.5% in 2010 (according to the latest available data, they sum now about 5 millions). Within migrant populations, the share of minors is growing slightly, being now about 22% (two thirds being second generation, i.e. born in Italy).

Table 1: Non-Italian population resident in Italy and demographic balance – Years 2004-2010

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Foreign residents at 31st December	2,402,157	2,670,514	2,938,922	3,432,651	3,891,295	4,235,059	4,570,317
Acquisition of Italian citizenship	19,140	28,659	35,266	45,485	53,696	59,369	65,938
Incidence of migrant population at the end of the year	4.1	4.5	5.0	5.8	6.5	7.0	7.5
Minors	501,792	585,496	665,625	767,060	862,453	932,693	993,238
Percentage of minors	20.9	21.9	22.6	22.3	22.2	22.0	21.7
Foreign residents* born in Italy (second generation)**	-	-	398,205	457,345	518,700	572,720	650,802
Percentage of second generation	-	-	13.5	13.3	13.3	13.5	14.2

* Second generation migrants are not automatically given Italian citizenship.

** Since the immigration for Italy is a relatively new phenomenon, with good approximation almost the totality of foreign residents born in Italy (second generation) are minors.

Source: adapted from Istat, 2011 and Caritas/Migrantes, 2012.

Romanians, recently entered in the EU, comprise by far the largest community (about one million residents, accounting for over 20% of the total), followed by Albanians (with just under 500,000, they account for more than 10%) and Ukrainians (4.4%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Foreign resident population by sex, geographical area and main countries of citizenship – 1st January 2010 and 2011

Continent and country of citizenship	N	%	Male/Female %	Variation 2010-2011 %
EUROPE	2,441,467	53.4	76.4	7.6
Romania	968,576	21.2	83.0	9.1
Albania	482,627	10.7	116.2	3.4
Ukraine	200,730	4.4	25.4	15.3
Moldova	130,948	2.9	48.9	24.0
AFRICA	986,471	21.6	146.1	5.9
Morocco	452,424	9.9	129.1	4.8
Tunisia	106,291	2.3	173.6	2.5
Egypt	90,365	2.0	228.3	10.1
ASIA	766,512	16.8	118.8	11.5
China	209,934	4.6	106.8	11.5
Philippines	134,154	2.9	72.9	8.6
India	121,036	2.6	154.3	14.3
AMERICA	372,385	8.1	60.5	8.5
Peru	98,603	2.2	66.3	12.4
Ecuador	91,625	2.0	70.8	6.6
OCEANIA	2,642	0.1	65.9	0.9
Stateless	840	0.0	121.6	-1.6
TOTAL	4,570,317	100.0	92.9	7.9

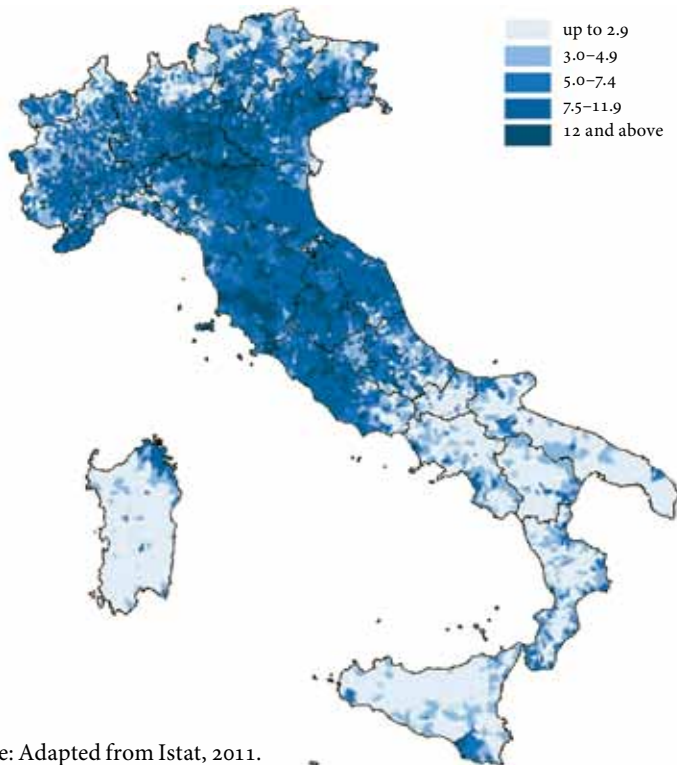
Source: Adapted from Istat, 2011.

More than half of foreign residents in Italy (53.4%) are Europeans, but some very large sized communities come from outside Europe, such as Moroccans (over 400,000, about 10%) and Tunisians (over 100,000, 2.3%); altogether, African immigrants total about 22%. The Chinese community is also quite large (more than 200,000 residents), followed by Filipinos and Indians, for a total of about 17% of immigrants coming from the Asian continent. The share of citizens from the Americas is 8.1%, with most of these coming from Peru and Ecuador.

The last column of Table 2 shows that last year's increase was just under 8%, with several differences at the continental level: a distinct gap can be noticed

between Africa (slowing down, with current growth at 5.9%) and Asia (over 11%). The highest growth rates are recorded for the citizens of Moldova (+24% in one year), Ukraine (+15%) and Romania (+9%) and, among non-European countries, India (+14.3%) and Peru (+12.4%). The rates of change are lower for Albania, Morocco and Tunisia.

Figure 1: Incidence of migrants by commune at 1st January 2011 (percentage)



Source: Adapted from Istat, 2011.

Figure 1 shows that the spread of migrants in Italy is quite inhomogeneous, with significant concentrations in Centre-North Italy, particularly around urban areas. Summary data in Table 3 show that the presence of immigrants is 10% in Centre-North and less than 3% in the South and the Islands; however, in perspective, the situation would balance, since the youth is currently experiencing much higher growth rates.

The presence of migrant populations in Italy will grow also because of different birth rates: while, in general, the incidence of immigrants is 7.5%, the immigrant population accounts for 16.1% of total births, with a huge difference between

North (over 20%) and South (only 3.9%). This fact reveals that the presence of foreigners in the South is qualitatively different: the much lower percentage of foreign-born children indicates that immigration is a quite recent phenomenon; the “actors” tend to be younger and/or have not yet formed a family union. This can also be noticed by looking at birth rates: on average, it is more than twice that of the Italians.

Table 3: Some indicators related to the balance of the Italian population and immigrants – Year 2010

Region	Percentage composition at the end of the year	Incidence of immigrant population at the end of the year	Percentage last year change	Percentage of foreign born on total births	Birth rate of immigrants (x 1000)	Birth rate of Italians (x 1000)
North-West	35.0	9.9	7.8	20.4	19.8	8.2
North-East	26.3	10.3	6.3	20.8	19.6	8.3
Center	25.2	9.6	7.9	15.7	15.4	8.5
South	9.6	3.1	11.5	3.9	12.5	9.2
Islands	3.9	2.7	11.9	3.9	14.2	9.0
ITALY	100.0	7.5	7.9	13.9	17.7	8.6
Of which in head towns	37.1	9.4	8.6	16.1	15.9	8.2

Source: Adapted from Istat, 2011.

THE ITALIAN SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THE PRESENCE OF NON-ITALIAN PUPILS

The fundamental principles of national legislation on education can be found in the Italian Constitution; specifically in articles 33 and 34, embodied in Title II “*Ethical and social rights and duties*”. Article 33 stipulates that it is the State’s duty to lay down the regulatory laws of the school system and to ensure that schools of all branches and grades are available to everyone without exception. The same article 33 also states that private schools and other educational institutions may also be established, at no cost to the State. Article 34 introduces the concept of compulsory education for 8 years; more recently, law 53/2003 states that it should last at least 12 years (starting from 6 years old) and defines the duty to ensure that all pupils achieve a qualification within the school system by the age of 18.

In addition to crèche (services for infants), nursery school (from 3 to 5 years old) and, of course, higher education, the Italian school system consists of a first and a second cycle. As regards the first cycle of education, primary school lasts five years (from 6 to 11). Students are divided according to their age into classes (in

small villages schools might have multi-classes) usually made up of a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 25-27 students. Middle school lasts three years (from 11 to 14) and concludes the first stage of education with a final exam giving pupils access to the next stage. Classes must have a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 27 students with specialist teachers responsible for teaching one or more subjects.

Presidential Decree 89/2010 stipulates that Lyceums must be divided into 6 different 5-year courses of study/curricula. The first four years are divided into two two-year periods; at the end of the fifth year students must pass a final examination enabling access to university. Four types of lyceums (classical, scientific, linguistic, human sciences) have maintained some features of the traditional pre-existing courses as regards number and type of subjects and timetable (30 hours a week on average). The Technical Institutes courses too last five years and are divided in two biennia and a fifth year, at the end of which students must take a final examination to obtain the Diploma in technical education. The Professional Institutes courses also last five years and award the Diploma in professional education, which enables holders of this qualification to access any university course. They have been reorganised into two main areas: Services and Industry and Handcrafts.

Statistical data show that the proportion of non-Italian students has increased rapidly, from a few thousands in the late 80s to more than 600,000 21 years later; at the same time, the percentage of non-Italian pupils in the total school population grew from a tiny fraction to reach seven per cent. Figure 2 also shows that the non-European component has also increased over time; this must be taken into consideration, since integration of students from these countries is more critical: linguistic diversity adds to greater cultural distance and somatic differences.

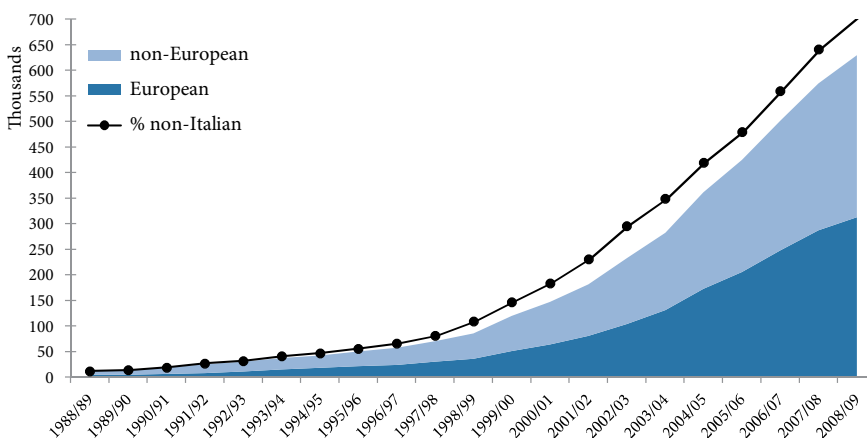


Figure 2: Students with non-Italian citizenship (absolute and percentage values) – School years 1988/89-2008/09

Source: Save the Children - Elaborations on Ministry of Education data, 2011.

The share of non-Italian students in the regions chosen for the research (altogether comprising the North-East macro-region) is higher than the Italian average (Figure 3).

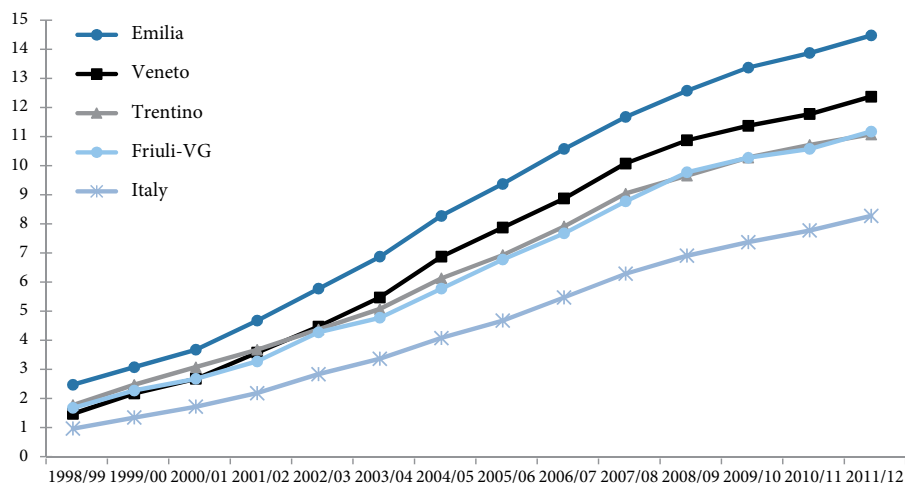


Figure 3: Incidence of non-Italian pupils in Italy and in the North-Eastern regions – School years 1998/99 - 2011/12

Source: Elaborations on Italian Ministry of Education data (various years).

Table 4: Students with non-Italian citizenship by school level for Italy; North-East and Friuli Venezia Giulia – School year 2010/11

School level	Italy		North-East		Friuli Venezia Giulia		FVG Provinces			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	PN	UD	GO	TS
Nursery	144,628	8.6	41,666	13.1	3,753	11.9	16.0	10.6	10.0	8.8
Primary	254,653	9.0	71,857	13.6	5,746	11.2	15.0	9.9	9.2	9.7
Lower Secondary	157,423	8.8	43,841	13.6	3,653	11.7	16.1	9.7	8.7	11.6
Upper Secondary	153,423	5.8	42,585	9.4	4,053	8.7	11.4	8.1	7.7	7.2
Total	710,263	7.9	199,949	12.3	17,205	10.7	14.4	9.5	8.8	9.2

Source: Elaboration of Statistical Service of RAFVG on Ministry of Education data, 2012.

Table 4 allows a quick comparison between the different territories: while the overall incidence of non-Italian pupils in Italian schools is around 8%, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia (FVG) the figures reaches almost 11% and in the North-East area it exceeds 12% (gaps having a similar width for all grade levels). Even more

interesting is to examine the considerable differences among the provinces of FVG; in practice, most of the difference between FVG and Italy overall is attributable to the significantly larger quota of non-Italian students in the province of Pordenone.

The top 10 countries of origin, together accounting for over 70% of non-Italian students enrolled in Friuli Venezia Giulia, are listed in Table 5. In the first place, Albanian pupils amount to 17.4% in Friuli Venezia Giulia and around 14% in North-East and Italy. In second place, both in Italy and FVG, Romanians count for 13.5% in FVG and almost 17% in Italy; in third place Serbs reach 11.9% in FVG and only 2.6% in Italy. The two following ethnic groups (Ghanaians and Bosnians) are fairly numerous in Friuli Venezia Giulia (more than 5% of incidence); while in Italy overall these ethnicities are rather marginal (just over 1%). As regards the Moroccans, we may notice the opposite situation, since their incidence in FVG schools is below 5%, three times less than in North-East and in Italy.

The immigration into the Friuli Venezia Giulia region reveals different features, as illustrated by the fact that the same top 10 nationalities that in FVG count for more than 70%, in Italy count for less than 60% (North-East being in an intermediate situation); actually, several nationalities that make up rather greater numbers in Italy, account for approximately 2% or less to the total in Friuli.

Table 5: Non-Italian pupils by main country of origin and gender (absolute values and percentages) – School year 2008/09

Country of Origin	Italy			North-East			Friuli-Venezia Giulia		
	N	% F	%	N	% F	%	N	% F	%
Albania	91,829	47.5	14.6	24,806	47.8	13.9	2,699	48.0	17.4
Romania	105,682	49.7	16.8	21,423	49.7	12.0	2,101	50.4	13.5
Serbia	16,151	47.5	2.6	9,492	47.7	5.3	1,848	46.4	11.9
Ghana	8,401	49.1	1.3	5,284	49.1	3.0	907	48.5	5.8
Bosnia-Herzegovina	6,751	46.6	1.1	3,771	46.4	2.1	796	45.2	5.1
Morocco	83,608	46.1	13.3	27,829	46.7	15.6	702	46.2	4.5
Macedonia	15,211	45.4	2.4	6,408	45.3	3.6	562	45.4	3.6
China	30,776	46.0	4.9	9,670	46.3	5.4	541	46.8	3.5
Croatia	2,998	49.1	0.5	1,828	49.2	1.0	487	48.3	3.1
Bangladesh	8,960	43.5	1.4	3,558	44.2	2.0	342	43.0	2.2
Rest of the World	258,993	-	41.2	64,345	-	36.1	4,543	-	29.3
Total	629,360	47.6	100.0	178,414	47.7	100.0	15,528	47.5	100.0

Source: Elaboration of Statistical Service RAFVG on Istat data, 2011.

The table also shows that the female percentage on the total of non-Italian students is less than 50%, while their share of total Italian students exceeds 50% (due to an increased participation of Italian girls in secondary school during the last decades). In addition, we notice a lower female participation for Islamic (Bangladesh and Morocco), and partially Islamic countries (Bosnia); Chinese student population too is placed just below the average.

A large proportion of non-Italian students (more than one third) was born in Italy (where *jus soli* does not apply); their incidence varies greatly according to their school level: almost three-quarters in nursery and less than half in primary school, dramatically dropping to less than 20% in secondary and significantly less than 10% in upper secondary. This is obvious enough: immigration changed – both quantitatively and qualitatively – only recently; thus, it had no time enough for its full effect to be felt in the secondary school environment.

Table 6 clearly shows that the choices of non-Italian students are especially directed towards the technical and professional institutes.

Table 6: Students without Italian citizenship by type and school year: school Grade II – School year 2011/12

Type of school	N	%	Per 100 enrolled
Classical high school	6,051	3.7	2.1
Scientific high school	16,936	10.3	2.8
Language high school	504	0.3	3.0
Former school masters	8,240	5.0	3.8
Technical institute	62,981	38.4	7.1
Professional institute	64,852	39.5	12.1
Arts institute	4,960	3.0	5.0
Total	164, 012	100.0	6.2

Source: Adapted from Miur, 2012.

THE ITALIAN LEGISLATION ON MINORITIES AND MINORS

The present work deals mainly with pupils with non-Italian citizenship, children of immigrants; anyhow, it may be of some interest to provide a brief introduction on the legislation dealing with the protection of autochthonous minorities, foreseen in articles 2, 3 and 6 of the Italian Constitution dealing with the inviolable rights of the person, of equality before the law and the safeguard of linguistic minorities.

By virtue of these principles, law n. 482/99 “on the protection of historical linguistic minorities” formally recognises the presence of twelve ethnic and linguistic minorities, but article 6 of the Constitution was actually applied before 1999 in some regions such as Friuli-Venezia Giulia: article 2 of the Regional Law 15/1996 states in fact that that “protection of the Friulian language and culture (is) a central issue for the development of special autonomy”.

The state laid down specific rules to protect the Slovene linguistic minority and art. 11 of law 38/2001 specifies that “in schools where the teaching language is Slovene, use of Slovene is permitted when communicating with the school, both orally and in writing, in official documents and public signs”.

As regards minors, it has been already stated that non-Italian children are a heterogeneous group: some of them live with at least one parent legally residing in Italy (accompanied minors); others with parents who are not legally resident and others without parents or other adults legally responsible for assisting or representing them (unaccompanied minors). In addition to this, all children in Italy are accorded the rights guaranteed in the New York Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 and, according to the Italian Consolidated Act on immigration, “the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration”.

Foreign children up to 14 years of age, in possession of a Family Reunion Resident Permit or a Resident Permit for Accompanying Family Members, are registered on one of their parents' residence permits. Children aged over 14 years can obtain an autonomous Residence Permit for family reasons. Unaccompanied minors are reported to the Committee for Foreign Children that firstly searches family members of the child in the origin's country or in other countries and then checks if the authorities of the country of origin can take custody of the child. Additionally, the Committee decides whether it is better for the child to remain in Italy or to be included in an assisted return program.

The Consolidated Act on Immigration also makes provision for rights to health care, to employment and to education. By virtue of the latter, all foreign children who also lack a valid residence permit are entitled to attend any kind of school level (not only compulsory education). Enrolment of non-Italian minors is based on the same procedures and requirements as envisaged for Italian children and can be requested at any time during the school year. The effectiveness of the right to education is guaranteed by the State, Regions and Local Authorities and includes also participation in Italian language courses. In Italy, the legal protection of minors is guaranteed by the Youth Court, acting as first instance courts for all administrative, civil or penal proceedings involving minors. Although there is no “national ombudsman for children” and no specific legislation in

Italy, there have been some Regional ombudsmen established to promote the rights of children and adolescents and the supervision of children living in community or in custody. Italian regional governments have also initiated actions of coordination, collection and processing of data on the condition of children and adolescents in their territory.

THE INTEGRATION OF NON-ITALIAN PUPILS INTO ITALIAN SCHOOLS

According to Circular Letters 205/1990 and 73/1994, a simple integration of non-Italian pupils is not enough: a dialogue between different cultures and a wider perspective, taking into consideration common values, is also needed. Thus, school education should promote the knowledge of Italian and European history and culture, at the same time promoting the knowledge of the culture and religion of children's country of origin, this way helping integration and overcoming prejudice. Accordingly, even though the non-Italian pupil's enrolment in the classroom by age is preferred, other criteria may be considered. For example, pupils with an insufficient knowledge of Italian may be enrolled in a lower class, with respect to age and previous studies. However, since this could be penalizing, *ad hoc* courses are organised (e.g. learning groups, laboratories) to strengthen language knowledge in a climate of openness between cultures. Intercultural education is the background against which specific training courses for non-Italian students take place with the purpose of establishing a daily practice of respect and coexistence. Another aim is to reject both the logic of assimilation and the establishment or strengthening of closed ethnic communities.

At present, "school autonomy" enables the construction of educational projects based on the *biographical and relational uniqueness* of the pupils. Even though not explicitly mentioning non-Italian students, school reform Act 53/2003 provides a basis for the potential development of all students, through the personalisation of the curriculum and the construction of individual learning paths.

Compulsory education is planned for all children legally resident in Italy, regardless of their nationality. The application can be filled in by the family of the non-Italian child *at any time* during the school year. Irregular students, or those without personal documents, will be admitted *conditionally*; a condition not affecting the achievement of qualifications at each level of the school system. School staff members are not required to report the illegal status of pupils attending school without a regular permit of stay. In order to activate the procedures for reception and custody or assisted repatriation, the educational institution must instead

report the presence of pupils without parents or other adults legally responsible for their protection. In order to arrange, if necessary, specific interventions, the school assesses the student's previous learning achievement and, at the same time, requests some documents (permit of stay, health documents, education records).

The Ministerial Circular n. 24/2006 underlines the importance of the presence of a *commission*, formed by a small group of teachers, which can handle the communication with the families, if necessary using interpreters or cultural mediators. Non-Italian pupils' families have, in fact, at least two kinds of main problems: language and difficulty in understanding the educational choices made by schools.

In principle, non-Italian students must attend the educational activities of the class in which they are enrolled; otherwise they can attend separate lectures, following a *personal study plan* to learn, for example, Italian. In order to facilitate language learning, schools increased the use of textbooks in original language, bi- or multi-lingual, "eased" texts, dictionaries in different languages, videos and CD-ROMs.

It's also important to remind that article 4 of the DPR n. 275/1999, concerning the autonomy of educational institutions, establishes that schools have the responsibility to find different criteria of evaluation for non-Italian pupils (in particular for the *new arrivals*), in compliance with the national legislation. According to this prescription, schools have been directed towards a model of *formative assessment*, instead of a mere *certification assessment*, adapting educational proposals to the real needs of the pupils and defining individualised objectives for the improvement of processes and outcomes.

The distribution of non-Italian students in the classrooms is defined by the Ministerial Circular n. 2/2010, dealing with specific problems that characterise the education of non-Italian pupils (early school leaving, poor knowledge of Italian language, need of differentiated teaching courses). The number of non-Italian students in a class is fixed on the basis of their knowledge of Italian language: the purpose is to guarantee the right to education, meaning not only access to school, but also to be able to reach a good educational level, regardless of linguistic and cultural diversity. Pupils with non-Italian citizenship normally should not exceed 30% of each class; a limit that may be increased or reduced according to the presence of non-Italian pupils already possessing adequate language skills or, on the contrary, inappropriate knowledge for an effective participation in the educational activities.

Italian law doesn't distinguish between the roles of linguistic and cultural mediator; in fact, there is not a real distinction between the two. The article 40 of the Law n. 40/1998 affirms that State, Regions, Provinces and Municipalities

have the obligation to encourage the employment, in their own structures, of non-Italian people as cultural mediators in order to help migrants in their relationships with the administration. However, just a few areas have a list of mediators who may be employed in case of need. Schools with a constant presence of non-Italian students (that means that a linguistic or cultural mediator is often called to help them), have to establish the characteristics of this professional figure, used as an educational support for those who need it, but must do so in the absence of clear legislation and a lack of money that reduces the range of action of mediators in schools (Urpis, 2010).

The Ministerial Circular 24/2006 identifies four areas of focus for mediators, at the same time confirming the assimilation of linguistic and cultural mediators:

- reception duties, mentoring and facilitation for newly arrived students and their families,
- mediation for teachers: the mediator provides them with information about the school system of the non-Italian student, his/her school and personal story,
- interpretation and translation (school papers, notices, etc.) for the parents of the non-Italian students, especially during the meeting with school teachers and
- proposals on intercultural education, aiming to promote the different cultures and traditions.

As mentioned above, the national legislation defines the way through which the State may finance incentives for projects relating to *risk areas* with a very high percentage of immigration and for projects that aim to reduce exclusion in schools. The General Director of the Regional Education Office, in cooperation with local Trade Unions, may establish the duration and contents of the projects and the system of evaluation of the results. At the national level, criteria should take proper account of the following aspects:

- the project should be inserted within the *Plan of Educational Offer*,
- teaching staff must be involved in the project,
- analysis of the territory and of the particular needs of the students should be carried out,
- particular attention should be taken for students who are at risk of dropping out of school,
- all components of the school, with particular attention to families, must be involved,
- the project must be consistent with the curriculum of the class and the subjects provided,
- the learning process must involve the student through a wide range of activities: laboratories, use of creativity, etc.

Italian Schools in the Face of Cultural Complexity and Bullying

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

Data have been collected using a structured questionnaire agreed with all the partners of the research; a “school questionnaire” was also employed to collect data about the school and specific data about the classes involved in the survey. The survey was organised in two phases: a *pilot study* (October 2011) and the *field study* from November 2011 to February 2012. The administration of the questionnaires took place in a very cooperative atmosphere among students, teachers and headmasters. Indeed, especially in the primary schools, the questionnaire led to an interesting debate on the issues of violence, racism and diversity.

Although it offered an interesting standpoint for the analysis of the cultural diversity, the questionnaire used to collect information on the school context presented the same critical points. The first aspect is related to the aggregation of schools in *Comprehensive Institutes*: this makes it somewhat difficult to collect disaggregated data for each single school. Another critical aspect relates to enrolled students actually not attending school: school data refer to the first month of the school year and do not take account of ongoing changes in the composition of classes.

Moreover, due to the constraints of a research of a comparative nature, data concerning adopted children were practically lost. At a secondary school in Trieste, for example, 25 adopted pupils should be added to the 90 non-Italian pupils, since they are Italian citizens, albeit with a non-Italian ethnic background. A specific situation is represented by pupils involved in the international protection procedure for obtaining the status of refugee, accorded after only 5 years of permanent residence in Italy (this is very common among immigrants from former Yugoslavia). Another singularity is represented by children who obtained Italian citizenship because of their Italian roots (a typical condition of grandchildren of last century Italian migrants and of Albanians). We can thus say that multi-ethnicity is a feature of Italian schools and that the criterion of citizenship used in collecting administrative data isn't exhaustive in order to describe the complexity of the Italian school system situation.

As regards the qualitative stage of research, four focus groups were conducted in Friuli Venezia Giulia and in Veneto, all of them in schools where the quantitative survey was carried out. Each focus group was attended by 5-6 pupils chosen by

teachers on the basis of gender and cultural difference (three Italians and three non-Italians). One focus group was composed of all females (three of them foreign adopted), since males in the class did not want to participate. The discussion started from the theme of diversity and then went on to collect testimonies of oppression and violence between peers.

Eight teachers were also interviewed: two from each school where focus groups were conducted and six experts, consisting of the Director of the National bureau against racial discrimination, a pedagogue, the Chairman of the Minors court of Trieste, a former undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, a volunteer of San Egidio Community (Rome) and a headmaster. The semi-structured interviews were conducted using a trace, but following an overtly communicative empathic approach.

The elementary schools selected for the research are all located in an urban environment: two are in city centre locations, five in urban areas and one in a suburban location. The number of students enrolled in the eight selected schools in the year 2011/12 is variable: both schools with between 200 and 300 students and larger schools were selected. The incidence of non-Italian pupils is 17.3%, with significant variations from school to school showing a sort of *migration chain*. Since school choice is not necessarily connected to residence proximity, migrant families may tend to choose schools where more structured intercultural programs are present. At the same time, Italian families can enrol their children in schools with a lower presence of non-Italians. Nationalities counted in selected schools are 85, with higher numbers of pupils from Albania, Morocco, China, Romania and Moldova; although heterogeneity among schools is quite high.

The secondary schools which took part in the study are also all located in urban environments: three in the city centre, three in the urban area and two in the suburbs. The survey was conducted only in technical and professional institutes, since almost 80% of non-Italian students are enrolled in this kind of school; a choice probably connected with the possibility to find faster job opportunities. In selected secondary schools, the incidence of non-Italian students is 16.7%, again varying significantly from school to school. As for elementary schools, non-Italian students and their families pay attention to interculturality programmes adopted by schools. The eight selected schools enrolled between 300 and more than thousand students in 2011/12. From the gender point of view, females are prevalent: in this respect, the particular curricula have a strong influence on gender distribution. In selected secondary schools, prevailing nationalities are in about the same proportion as that seen above for elementary schools, with a slight majority of students from Balkan countries (heterogeneity is again very high).

SUPPORT AND HELP IN SCHOOLS

Some preliminary interesting findings of the research have been obtained by the analysis of the “school questionnaire” that permitted the assessment that prevention projects related to ethnic or interethnic violence are not common. Data on this aspect were not collected, partly because ethnic violence is considered not so relevant by teachers. A broad diffusion of practices connected to interculturality has instead been ascertained in all schools with two different types of intervention for two different targets: newly arrived non-native Italians and Italian natives with a good knowledge of Italian language.

As for the first target, all schools have launched *Welcoming Protocols* (Protocollo di Accoglienza – PDA) for students having already started a scholastic career in other countries. PDAs usually include briefings with non-Italian students and their families, with the presence of linguistic mediators, whose aim is to provide details about the organisation of the Italian school system and to guide students in choosing the most appropriate course of study. Schools establish the language proficiency of non-Italian students and offer support activities and linguistic mediation in the classroom. Inside the PDA, the establishment of an *Interculture Commission* is also foreseen, and many schools created a *Multicultural Library*, with mono- and bilingual dictionaries, classical texts, technical manuals and multimedia tools using a vocabulary appropriate for the language skills of non-Italian students. Extracurricular courses of Italian as a second language are also organised; in some schools Italian students are identified as tutors for non-Italian students.

A second type of practices aims to raise awareness among Italian and non-Italian students about the topic of integration: this is the case of the *Peace, solidarity and interculturality project* and of intercultural festivals, where children learn customs and traditions of the world.

Several schools pay special attention to the relations between families and school institutions; this is possible due to the presence of linguistic mediators that facilitate communication. In some instances, specific Italian language courses are offered to student's parents; thanks to the advice of experts, parents are able to follow the child in performing household tasks, at the same time improving their Italian competence.

As anticipated, specific practices concerning interethnic violence are less common; usually schools don't have specific projects. In general, initiatives of this kind are more present in secondary than in elementary schools. We also noticed self-managed assemblies in secondary schools: students proposing topics for discussion, lectures, views of movies related to the more relevant issues in

school life (often including bullying, violence and integration). A *Do the right thing* project was realised, aiming at promoting the culture of citizenship by training pupils on conflict mediation, cyber bullying and respect in the community.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY

Students generally have no particular suspicion towards those with a different ethnic background. They tend to observe and judge the personal qualities of their peers, according a particular significance to their specific behaviour and characteristics and neglecting cultural diversity. What matters seems to be the person as such, not his/her origin. At first there may be some hesitation, but eventually this is overcome. They often claim that we are all equal even if we have differences and this open attitude leads them to consider the other for what he/she really is and not for what he/she represents:

“The colour of the skin doesn’t count as well. What counts is how one is within and without. The colour of the skin doesn’t count anyway, even if one is a ‘foreigner’ he is always a person.” (m, 10)

A battery of seven questions was aimed to explore the attitude of acceptance of cultural diversity, starting from “all men are equal”, a statement of principle accepted with “strongly agree” by half of the students. Another third or so chose the answer “agree”. This statement is thus shared by the vast majority of students; as such, it becomes more interesting to explore the “disagree” side (about 7% overall).

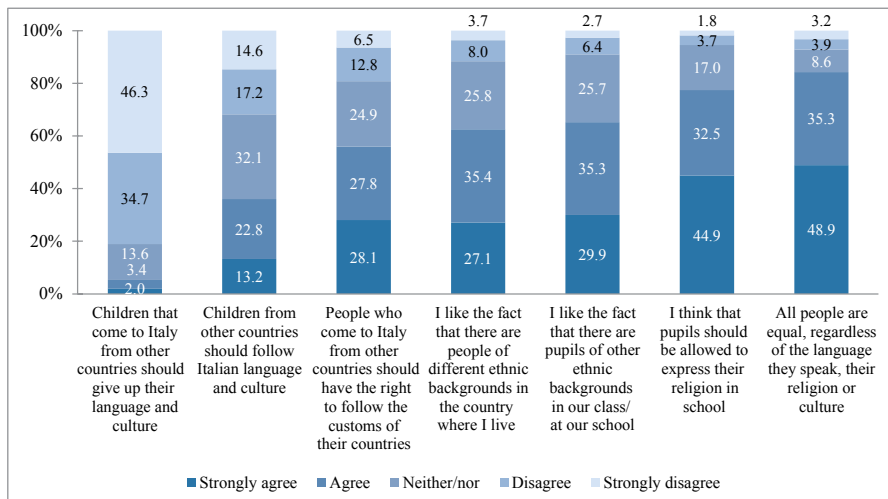


Figure 4: Agreement/disagreement on statements on equality

The breakdown of disagreement by nationality (Table 7) shows an accentuation within non-Italian pupils (13% among non-Europeans). This apparently paradoxical situation helps us realise that not agreeing with the statement does not necessarily mean discarding equality, but simply noting that this is an aspiration that is contradicted by reality (something like saying “it would be nice, but...”). A large majority (77%) also accepts the assertion that pupils should be free to express their religious beliefs at school, with a slight accentuation by females and, unsurprisingly, by non-Italian pupils. A greater difference is found in comparing the answers by type of school (over 85% share this statement in primary school and less than 70% in secondary school).

Table 7: Agree and strongly agree on statements on equality by age/kind of school, gender and nationality (percentages)

Statements	General	Age/Kind of school		Gender		Nationality/Ethnic background		
		Primary	Secondary	Male	Female	Italian	European	Non-European
All people are equal, regardless of the language that they speak, their religion or culture.	83.9	90.1	77.6	79.8	88.1	84.0	85.0	82.1
I think that pupils should be allowed to express their religion in school.	77.0	85.6	68.2	73.9	79.9	75.3	82.5	85.1
I like the fact that there are pupils of other nationalities or ethnic backgrounds in our class or school.	64.7	77.6	51.4	62.9	66.6	60.0	88.8	76.1
I like the fact that there are people of different ethnic backgrounds in the country where I live.	62.3	76.8	47.4	59.8	64.9	57.3	83.8	79.1
People who come from other countries should have the right to follow the customs of their countries.	55.7	77.9	33.0	59.6	52.1	50.4	77.5	74.6
I think that children that come from other countries should follow our language and culture.	35.9	21.5	50.6	34.8	36.5	37.6	28.8	29.9
Children that come from other countries should give up their language and culture.	5.3	3.6	7.1	6.7	3.7	6.5	0.0	1.5

Moving from very general statements to situations with highest impact on the lives of respondents, the situation changes. In fact, asking whether they like the fact that there are pupils from different ethnic backgrounds in their classroom or school, the agreement drops to just under two thirds. If one looks only at the answers given by the Italians, the percentage only slightly exceeds half of this sub-sample (non-Italians instead agree in about 80% of cases). Similar results may be ascertained when asking whether one likes or not the presence of migrant people in Italy. More than half of the students (56%) prove to be considerably open-minded when they agree with the statement “people should have the right to follow the customs of their country”. It should be noted that the statement is not so trivial as it may appear at first glance because foreign “customs” may include beliefs and practices that many people would judge repugnant or immoral. Hence, the percentage of tolerance is quite high. This positive attitude towards cultural diversity is not fully confirmed by the answers to the statement “children from other countries should follow Italian language and culture”, with which around one third of the students agree (32%) and one third disagree (36%). The quota of those who disagree (the “multiculturalists”) is perhaps lower than we might expect; however, it is probable that many students think that Italian culture and language are powerful vehicles of integration for non-Italian children living in our country.

PERCEPTION AND EVALUATION OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Kids show a clear perception of cultural diversity. Even pupils in the primary school know exactly how to identify those who are different, either because they bear different genes or because they belong to a different culture; they also know how to identify which type of culture an individual belongs to.

Table 8: Ethnic composition of family by internationality/ethnic background

Nationality of parents		General	Nationality/Ethnic background		
			Italian	European	Non-European
Both Italian		71.8	89.2	3.8	6.0
One Italian		7.3	7.2	8.8	6.0
Both non-Italian		20.9	3.5	87.5	88.1
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	714	567	80	67

In Table 8, parents' nationalities are combined: families in which both parents are Italians slightly exceed 70%, mixed families are 7.3% and those with both parents non-Italian are slightly over 20%. The breakdown by nationality shows many cases of "mismatch" between the nationality of pupils and parents, due in part to adoptions.

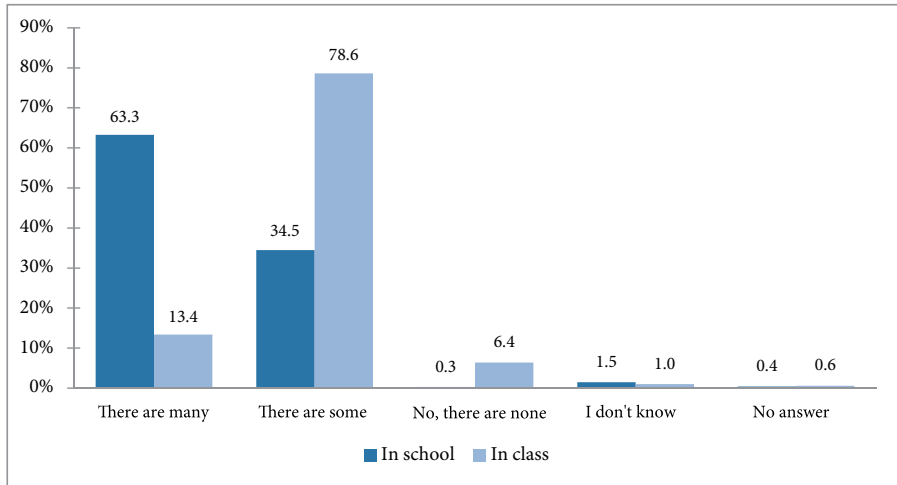


Figure 5: Pupils of different ethnic background in school and class

In the surveyed schools – both in the elementary and in the secondary – pupils of non-Italian nationality comprise little more than 20%, with a perfect balance between Europeans (other than Italian) and non-Europeans in the elementary schools and, on the other hand, a higher quota of Europeans in secondary schools. Since classes have been carefully selected to assure a presence of non-Italian pupils that may be higher than the school average it's interesting to note that, within the classes, the presence of non-Italians is perceived as less "impactful", since only 13.4% of respondents said that they are "many", even when the percentage reaches almost two thirds when talking about the school as a whole. Since in classes pupils with a different background make up just a few units, they may not be defined as "many"; while, summing up to tents in the school, this may be considered "many" even if the share is the same in the two contexts.

At any rate, pupils' perceptions of cultural diversity does not imply the construction of a hierarchy between cultures; they often repeat the mantra that we are all equal but at the same time all different; and that we all have the same rights:

“Well ... what does it mean to be different?”

“In my opinion, being different means, for example, having a different face, having a different hair colour, different qualities...” (f, 10)

“Does the fact of being different from another person help others or yourself in some way to better understand who you are?”

“Well, it helps others and helps me, too.” (f, 10)

“It helps you because it makes you different from the others, which means that you are unique.” (m, 10)

“So do you think we are all unique or all the same?”

“Unique, but we all have the same rights and the same duties.” (m, 10)

“What rights do you have?”

“The right to go to school, to be treated well, to receive respect from people.” (m, 10)

The widespread refusal to attach a value (positive or negative) to diversity is very interesting because it means that in students' stereotypes there is little or no implicit negative judgment of those who bear different physical traits:

“So, in your opinion, does the concept of diversity carry with it the concept of inferiority too? You seem to connect the two, don't you?”

“Sometimes yes, but I do not think so.” (m, 10)

“So, according to you, to be different does not necessarily mean to be of a lower status...”

“Exactly.” (m, 10)

“Or a higher status... What does it mean to be lower then?”

“Someone thinks that somebody is inferior to him because he is not sometimes of the same race, does not speak the same language, does not profess the same religion or doesn’t have the same economic opportunities or a wealthy family that pampers him and so on.” (f, 10)

“Think so because nobody can be inferior to someone else because we are all equal.” (m, 10)

“We are equal in value, even if we are different physically or psychologically. If you have less money, this doesn’t mean you are trash or something like that because, being all human beings, we all have a very high value.” (f, 10)

The students are likely to recognise diversity without giving positive or negative judgments. An individual may be considered “different” and nevertheless be judged only on his behaviour and his personality. He or she is a person and his or her particular cultural background is not so relevant.

OPEN-MINDEDNESS TOWARDS CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Students’ orientation toward universalistic standards is also confirmed by the answers to specific questions that were aimed at testing “in practice” what was stated “in principle” by proposing real-world situations and asking pupils whether they were willing to accept pupils of different ethnic background.

Firstly, it was asked if they were willing to sit next to a child not speaking Italian well, belonging to a different religion or having a different skin colour. It’s (perhaps) surprising that the highest overall level of acceptance is reached by the different skin colour (accepted by about 70%), compared with differences in language and religion (both lie anyway above 60%). The same was also proposed as a motive for being or not being friends of pupils with the same characteristics; in this instance, the level of acceptance rises by five to over ten percentage points.

Looking at Figure 6, one can see in general a greater acceptance in primary schools, with the only exception of being willing to be a friend of someone who does not speak well your language (“no problem” for almost 80% in secondary school and slightly more than 70% in the primary).

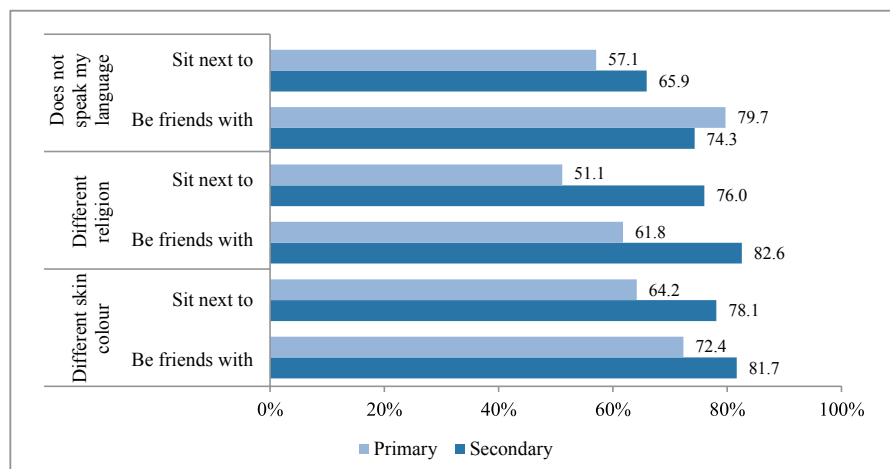


Figure 6: Happy to sit next to and would be friends with pupils of different ethnic background by age/kind of school

Looking at gender (Table 9), there are no exceptions to the general “rule”: for all situations, females describe themselves as more open to diversity than males. Finally, non-Italian pupils systematically appear to be more “welcoming” than Italians; quite often the difference exceeds twenty percentage points.

Table 9 - Happy to sit next and to be friends with pupils of different ethnic background by gender and nationality

Statements	General	Gender		Nationality/Ethnic background		
		Male	Female	Italian	European	Non-European
Happy to sit next to a pupil who is unable to speak (well) my mother tongue.	61.2	57.3	65.2	56.6	82.5	74.6
Happy to sit next to a pupil who has a different religion from me.	62.3	61.8	62.9	57.8	78.8	80.6
Happy to sit next to a pupil whose skin colour is different from mine.	70.2	67.4	73.1	67.4	78.8	83.6
Friends with a pupil who is unable to speak (well) my mother tongue.	75.9	71.6	80.5	72.8	91.3	83.6
Friends with a pupil who has a different religion from me.	70.6	69.4	71.7	67.5	85.0	79.1
Friends with a pupil whose skin colour is different from mine.	75.5	72.8	78.8	73.7	82.5	82.1

In some instances, open-mindedness overcomes even the most widespread stereotypes, as the following excerpt from a focus group shows:

“People think that all Serbs and Albanians are dangerous people, walking around armed with knives; but also many Italians are like them. Unfortunately only ‘foreigners’ are seen as bad people.” (m, 19)

“People, just because they come from Eastern Europe (Albanians, Serbs, Romanians) are considered more dangerous than let’s say the Chinese.” (f, 19)

“What were the relations with the Chinese students? The Chinese people are generally very close, reserved.”

“I had Chinese mates in my classroom. I sat in front of them, we talked and they were fun people: we laughed, joked... there were no problems; they were nice.” (m, 19)

SAFETY INSIDE THE SCHOOL

The attitude of students toward the school is generally good. Primary schools especially are perceived as safe and protected places even if interethnic violence and bullying sometimes occur. The presence of teachers in primary schools and the often-disputed authority of professors in high schools avoid the most extreme forms of violence. These occur primarily outside the school.

“Did these situations you experienced happen in your school or not?”

“No”. (f, 10)

“No, because there are teachers and janitors who watch them... and then because they know they must behave in a different way.” (m, 11)

“No, because in school these guys [meaning the bullies] behave quite well; while, when they go out, they turn into beasts.” (m, 10)

Institutions aim to foster a proper standard of behaviour among pupils and, by their nature, convey symbols and shape human behaviours: Italian schools,

at least those we observed, still maintain their pedagogical function, their role in the formation of the individual. They are also perceived as places where pupils are sheltered from either personal or racial violence. Note that this answer given by a Serbian pupil:

“Then do you feel protected when you’re in school?”

“Yes, it is as if there was a barrier around us [when we are at school], like if you were invulnerable.” (m, 10)

In Figure 7, a complete picture is provided for school environments, ordered according to the sum of “totally safe” and “safe” answers and three locations (canteen, classroom, gym) and exceeding 85% of positive responses. School corridors and locker area are at just under 80%, while toilets and the school playground are around 75%. One should not underestimate the fact that between a fifth and a quarter of respondents do not feel completely safe (some not safe at all) in these last locations. Even more problematic, according to the interviewees, is the situation at the bus stop, since just a little more than half of respondents feel safe there. The difference diminishes a bit considering that the “in between” answer is much more frequent, but the mean “safety score” obtained by each school environment (not shown here) confirms that bus stops, together with toilets and playground, are considered less safe than other environments.

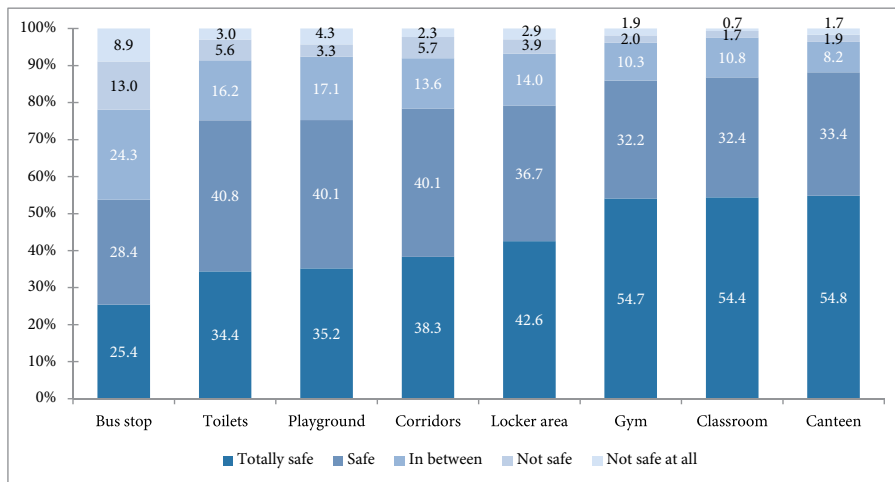


Figure 7: Feeling safe inside the school (items reordered by sum of “totally safe” and “safe”)

In order to make group comparisons easier, we have developed a comprehensive indicator by averaging the percentages of pupils that feel safe in the eight sites (also not shown). The difference between males (80.4%) and females (75.8%) is not very high. The difference is a little more pronounced when comparing the different nationalities, with more Italians feeling confident (78.8%) compared with the rest of Europeans (75.6%) and non-Europeans (72.6%). The situation appears much more diversified when comparing the two types of schools: the percentage of confident pupils is much lower in primary (68.8%) than in secondary schools (86.2%).

BULLYING

The problem of bullying in the schools does not have a purely interethnic nature and does not always coincide with repeated violent acts on a victim. It very often appears in the form of a generalised violence in which different elements are involved. The relatively low incidence of bullying may be due to the fact it is not always fully understood.

As can be seen from the focus groups carried out in an elementary school, the words and the concepts that children associate with bullying are: “people who want things that belong to others”, “mean or unintelligent”, “arrogance”, “a dangerous person”, “greed and without sensitivity”, “a wee bit mean”, “guys who want to smoke too”, “beat other guys”, “make heavy jokes”, “tease people, want to be noticed”, “tease to show up”.

Violence – both in interpersonal and in every other kind of relationship – is part of a continuum of behaviours which are pragmatically connected but have different characteristics. We all know how easily acts of affection can suddenly turn into either verbal or physical aggression. Moreover, the very structure of the students’ everyday lives, with their simultaneous characteristics of solidarity and competition (school, sex, etc.), leads to dissolution of the differences between unique types of action. For example, students tend to confuse sporadic acts of violence with bullying. They do not always understand the meaning of recurrent acts of violence against designated victims and tend to confuse any expression of violence (including spontaneous violence) with bullying. Teachers are not easily able to disentangle the confusion between the various meanings since both their role and their adult status keep them apart from student’s and youth’s world.

Of course, interethnic violence exists; but it is part of a phenomena continuum of more or less violent behaviours caused by a mix or combination of different reasons. Violence between peers very often has the characteristics of violence between

different groups, in which ethnic elements may be absent. In other circumstances, ethnic groups are formed to fight against culturally defined aggregations. Finally, there is a continuity not only between violent and non-violent behaviours, but also – within the class of violent behaviours – between those that are ethnically motivated and those that are not (or are far less) ethnically motivated.

Nonetheless, despite the complexity of the situation, interethnic violence is more prevalent outside the school since all the cases of extreme violence that were reported took place after school hours. These findings are confirmed by our questionnaire data: as can be seen from Figure 8, the most extreme forms of bullying, i.e. acts involving physical aggression, are comparatively infrequent in students' perceptions.

Moreover, interethnic bullying (in all its forms) is by no means unidirectional: victims of ethnic aggression, from insult to withdrawal, to overt violence, are present among Italians and non-Italians too, although the quota of victimised non-Italians is obviously a little higher.

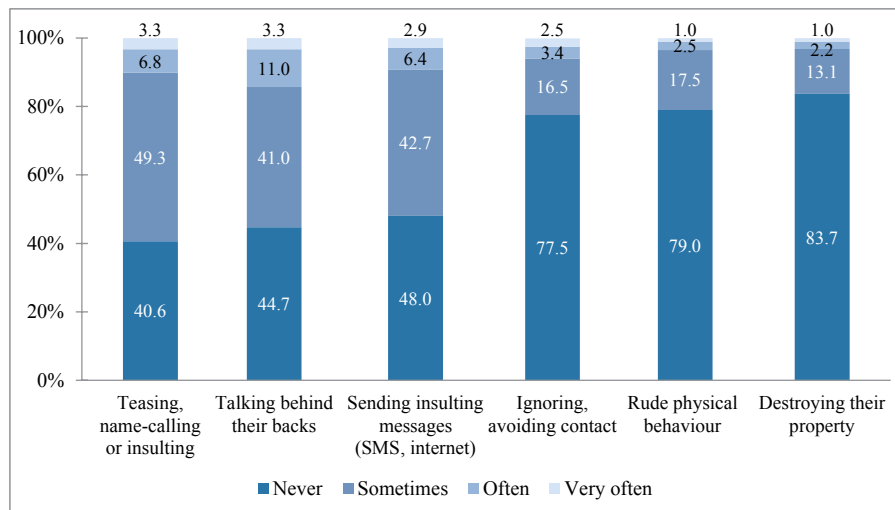


Figure 8: Forms of bullying happened at school (ordered by sum from “very often” to “sometimes”)

AGGRESSORS AND VICTIMS

The bullies, according to the testimony of the kids and of the interviewed experts, are people who display some knowledge of the human soul and are able to understand the problems of their friends. Through empathy and emotional closeness, bullies obtain the details that enable them to control their victims by

acting on their physical and psychological weaknesses. In some cases a bully may be an individual who has suffered violence and learns that one way to control it is to inflict it in turn. Some of the bully's victims are cowards who, fearing to become objects of violence, turn into bullies themselves and join (even if in a subordinate position) the circle of violence.

Bullies are feared both because they are physically capable of engaging in violence because they are psychologically able through use of positive and negative sanctions to bind people to his or her group. Every action judged positively is rewarded by the respect of the other members; every negative action of defection is punished with blackmail. Blackmail is made possible by the instrumental and cunning use of the knowledge of other's secrets, extorted through the bully's special talent.

Regarding the social typology of the bully, it seems that they don't belong to any specific category, even if the those bullies with a higher social status are less likely to accept diversity:

"Well-off girls and those who think they are very beautiful do not accept others. They think they are superior to everyone." (f, 18)

The use of violence (within certain limits) cuts across cultures, gender, age, since it depends on deeper factors connected to personality traits and life experiences of the subjects. With respect to gender, for example, many respondents claim that now the phenomenon of violence has become, in an almost undifferentiated way, common to males and females, although with different manifestations.

Girls tend mainly to exert psychological violence, which is perpetrated with a very wide range of humiliations and slanders. These actions are less recognisable and are less frequently punished by teachers. This makes them sometimes more harmful to their victims because impunity fuels repetition: a never-ending daily drip-drip. It needs also to be emphasised that, since the male bully normally relies on the typical qualities of his gender (physical force in the first place), he has always to deal with gender's identity. The affirmation of his masculinity passes through a more or less dramatic expression of homophobia.

Figure 9 shows the distribution of the offenders and of the victims among boys and girls: approximately one quarter of pupils did not answer the questions, since they think or believe that bullying never happens in their school. According to three-quarters of the "surviving" respondents, both boys and girls are victims; among the rest, which indicates just one gender, it is largely those who think that it happens mostly to males (17.8%) that predominate as against those who instead think that victims are prevalently females (7.9%).

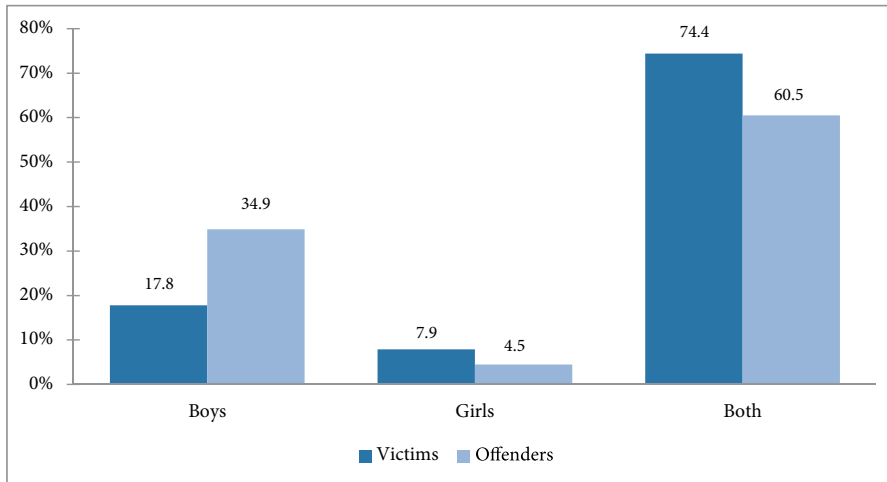


Figure 9: Who are the victims and the offenders of bullying at school

More pupils in secondary school – and a majority of males themselves – are convinced that males are predominantly the victims; and, of course, the same happens “on the other side”, girls being more inclined to state that they are predominantly the victims.

People subjected to persecution and violence are usually characterised by some well-defined physical or psychological traits. Generally they are younger, physically weaker and temperamentally fragile and exhibit an overall inferiority status that is typical of any scapegoat.

“Yes, for example, those in middle school, the oldest, make fun of the youngest because they think, since they are stronger, they are the best too. Maybe they tease and offend the smaller kids, maybe these kids will react and they will fight.” (f, 10)

Children who exhibit some form of disability, especially those affected by less severe forms, such as character disorders, autism etc., are often subject to violence. Since sometimes disability is not visible, these children are recognised to be at the same time equal and different because “strange”. Probably the (relatively) minor pathology of these children is likely to make them be perceived as sufficiently “other” to turn them into the targets of hostility because they are not so ill either to inhibit aggressive behaviour or to arouse feelings of pity and protection.

“I have experienced that... we were involved in a fight, but nothing to do with the cultural aspect. Since I have been here, it has never happened to me to have a confrontation because of my culture.” (f, 18)

"We insulted a schoolmate who was handicapped. He was an odd boy, he lived in his own world and we like jerks did everything to make him go crazy. It was not a nice experience. He was different from us, and then we looked at him in a different way. We pulled his legs. Once I brought my camera in the classroom and loaned it to a friend of mine who pretended to shoot him and he made something on my camera because he got annoyed. I got really angry, I grabbed him and stuck him against the wall and from that moment I started to insult him but eventually I realised that we were idiots." (f, 18)

"But in my opinion he was different." (m, 18)

"What do you mean by different?"

"He was distant, did not speak with us although it was apparent that he would have liked to do so. Then sometimes you laughed at him because, for example, he wore his trousers on the other side, he was odd. He was closed-minded, he believed that the stork brought the baby home; there was no way to change his opinion. He was very religious." (f, 18)

In other cases there are other elements that make the subject different or deviant from the dominant cultural model among his peers. Then it is the strangers, the nerds, those who are out of fashion or who express strong religious feelings, who become subject to violence.

"Once it happened that, while G [m] and G [m] were playing football, some older kids arrived and told them, 'Go away!' They said no and the kids began to beat them. They don't let us play and say that I'm just a Moroccan." (f, 10)

"What do they mean when they say: 'you're just a Moroccan?'"

"That I don't have their same rights and that they are superior." (f, 10)

"So do they first ask you: where are you from?"

"Yes, yes... but only the older ones do." (f, 10)

In the case of cultural diversity we have to take into consideration those elements that make the subject weak, such as the lack of language skills or the circumstance that they cannot count on their parents' help. In fact, according to various testimonies, non-Italian children are less protected by their parents than Italian children. This makes them vulnerable in the eyes of the strongest and therefore more susceptible to be attacked.

“When I saw that the Filipino child had been targeted by the group, I invited his parents to explain to them that their son had been the victim of systematic violence and that, especially outside the school, his situation was really unbearable. However non-Italian parents do not have the same power to protect their children as the Italians... When an Italian parent knows that his child is the subject of harassment, he immediately complains, while non-Italian parents do not.” (headmaster, secondary school)

As Table 10 shows, non-European students are more likely to ask for help to the teachers, while their Italian and other-European schoolmates more frequently find their families to be the place where they may take refuge and express their grievances.

Table 10: Who would you contact when bullied by kind of school, gender and nationality?

Who	General	Age/Kind of school		Gender		Nationality/Ethnic background		
		Primary	Secondary	Male	Female	Italian	European	Non-European
Friends	67.9	58.4	78.8	63.0	73.8	69.8	62.3	61.0
Mother/carer	52.3	64.1	38.8	43.6	62.4	55.6	45.6	35.6
Father/carer	30.4	45.3	13.5	32.9	27.7	33.4	23.2	16.9
Brother/sister	23.6	28.7	17.8	23.2	24.0	23.7	27.5	18.6
Teacher	5.2	7.4	2.7	6.6	3.8	4.4	4.3	11.9
Peer mediators	3.8	4.1	3.5	3.8	3.8	2.6	8.7	6.8
Other	12.9	13.5	12.3	16.6	8.7	12.1	11.6	20.3
No one	13.8	18.8	8.9	11.7	15.7	14.8	10.0	12.5

Non-Italian students are also “tougher” than Italians: the former tend to react to bullying by “fighting back”, while the latter are more inclined to “ask for help” (Table 11).

Table 11: Reactions when bullied by age/kind of school, gender and nationality (percentage)

Reaction	General	Age/Kind of school		Gender		Nationality/Ethnic background		
		Primary	Secondary	Male	Female	Italian	European	Non-European
I fight back	29.6	24.4	35.3	33.7	24.9	27.3	31.7	41.8
I do the same to the bully	25.3	21.5	29.4	24.4	26.8	23.9	33.3	25.5
I put up with it	16.5	18.7	14.0	15.5	18.0	17.3	11.7	16.4
I don't react	10.3	8.9	11.8	12.8	7.3	12.2	5.0	3.6
I ask for help	9.0	15.9	1.4	8.9	8.3	10.2	6.7	3.6
I cry	4.9	4.9	5.0	1.6	8.8	4.0	8.3	7.3
I run away	2.4	4.5	0.0	1.6	3.4	2.6	1.7	1.8
Other	2.1	1.2	3.2	1.6	2.4	2.6	1.7	0.0
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	467	246	221	258	205	352	60
No answer	34.6	32.0	37.2	27.8	41.6	37.9	25.0	17.9

TYPES OF VIOLENT ACTIONS

The form of bullying most frequently reported is “talking behind someone’s back”, reported by 13.1% of respondents, and second is being insulted or called derogatory names (12.3%); so that, in this not pleasant classification, the more frequent facts are, at the same time, the less severe ones (Table 12). The third form is the feeling of being ignored or to be avoided, reported by about 7% of pupils, with noteworthy differences according to nationality (from about 5% of Italians to 12.5% for other Europeans and 18.5% for the non-Europeans). Other more serious forms of bullying (physical violence and damage to objects owned by the victim) reach a total of almost 6% while 6.6% is the observed occurrence of other forms of bullying that may not be traceable to those already described.

Table 12: Being victim of bullying by age/kind of school, gender and nationality

	General	Age/Kind of school		Gender		Nationality/Ethnic background		
		Primary	Secondary	Male	Female	Italian	European	Non-European
Other pupils call me names or insult me	12.3	13.3	11.1	14.4	10.3	7.4	25.0	37.9
Other pupils talk or say untruthful things, behind my back	13.1	13.8	12.4	16.3	9.8	7.5	29.5	42.2
Other pupils send insulting SMS or e-mails, post insulting comments on Facebook, Twitter	2.1	3.2	1.1	2.3	2.0	1.8	2.5	4.7
Other pupils ignore me or avoid contacts with me	6.9	8.1	5.7	8.5	5.4	4.8	12.5	18.5
Other pupils hit me, kick me, spit at me or express other forms of rude physical behaviour to me	2.5	4.2	0.9	3.4	1.7	2.1	2.5	1.5
Other pupils hide or destroy my things	3.4	5.6	1.2	4.5	2.3	2.9	3.8	7.7
Other	6.6	3.4	16.7	10.6	0.0	4.8	0.0	33.3

Some differences emerge when comparing the bullying observed at schools with the bullying personally experienced by the respondents; some differences emerge in the hierarchy of “troubles”, probably because of some over- or under-estimation. Not surprisingly, pupils that report bullying happened to them are much fewer in number; however, the ratio of incidents happening in school should remain more or less the same. Instead, pupils reporting that insults are sent by means of electronic devices are ten times more numerous than pupils saying this actually happened to them. A ratio of about eight times more is recorded for “hit and spit” and for “ignore, avoid”, five times for “hide and destroy” and “call names” and only four times for “talk behind someone’s back”.

REACTIONS TO BULLYING

When confronted with cases of violence, students’ behaviour varies depending on age. Primary school pupils usually report the facts immediately to their teachers, who are their reference points to which they run every time there is some behaviour that breaks the rules (many times they tell their parents too).

“When their mates behaved badly, they immediately had to tell me the facts; then in class we talked about the issue. They confide in me.” (teacher, primary school)

High school boys, instead, sometimes consider their teachers as “aliens” and follow the rules of the group that prescribe them a strict code of silence.

“But have you ever told your teachers?”

“No, because they can’t understand.” (f, 18)

Table 13: What do you do when bullying happens by age/kind of school, gender and nationality/ethnic background

Reaction	General	Age/Kind of school		Gender		Nationality/Ethnic background		
		Primary	Secondary	Male	Female	Italian	European	Non-European
I help him or her	33.8	45.2	21.0	38.5	28.7	30.4	38.8	54.4
I tell teacher or another staff member	18.6	28.7	7.4	19.1	18.0	20.7	10.4	12.3
I tell them that this is not right	16.0	10.6	22.1	11.7	21.0	14.0	26.9	19.3
Nothing but I think I should help him or her	12.9	5.0	21.8	10.4	15.8	13.6	11.9	8.8
Nothing and walk away because this is none of my business	8.0	2.0	14.8	9.0	6.6	9.3	6.0	0.0
I tell another adult	5.4	5.3	5.5	2.7	8.5	5.8	4.5	3.5
Nothing but I stay and watch	4.0	3.0	5.2	6.4	1.5	4.7	1.5	1.8
I join the ones who treat him or her badly	0.5	0.0	1.1	1.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0
Other	0.7	0.3	1.1	1.3	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0
Total	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	N	574	303	271	299	272	450	67

Even as participant observers during the survey, we noticed some discrepancy between the interpretation of reality given by the students and the interpretation given by their teachers. In two cases, during the focus groups held in the high schools where episodes of bullying had occurred, interviewed teachers were inclined to share somewhat bland interpretations and evaluations. The teachers knew the facts but they did not interpret them as bullying. Students instead recognised the behaviour as offensive, often overstepping the limits of human dignity, both in the case of the boy (who later died) and in the case of the girl (who later changed schools).

The difference between primary and secondary school students' reactions also emerges from our quantitative data. While most students show a protective attitude toward the victims (33.8%), their second choice is the involvement of the teacher (18.6%), with significant differences being noted according to the type of school (28.7% in the primary and only 7.4% in secondary). It's also worth noting that over 20% of Italians will involve the teacher, while the percentage drops down to around 10% for non-Italian students.

VICTIMS' REACTIONS TO BULLYING

The feelings experienced during episodes of violence are often cited as feelings of rejection but violence produces contrasting effects. In many cases the fear of violence generates resignation or, in other cases, emulation.

Excitement reigns during the acts of violence: the defensive violence of victim triggers an escalation of more and more aggressive reactions by bullies, due to a perverse mechanism of collective excitement.

“Then it happened that we couldn't stand her presence. In the 3rd grade year because of our former class and what we had done to him, it was the year in which he got crazy and started to have a psychological aid. Then, however, they gave him medication to calm him down. He was violent enough if we started to bother him. Once he destroyed the mobile phone of one of his former classmate. And so we couldn't stand him anymore... Afterwards we kept calm since we realised that we had made a bullshit, we didn't give him anymore trouble and we hadn't contact with him anymore.” (f, 18)

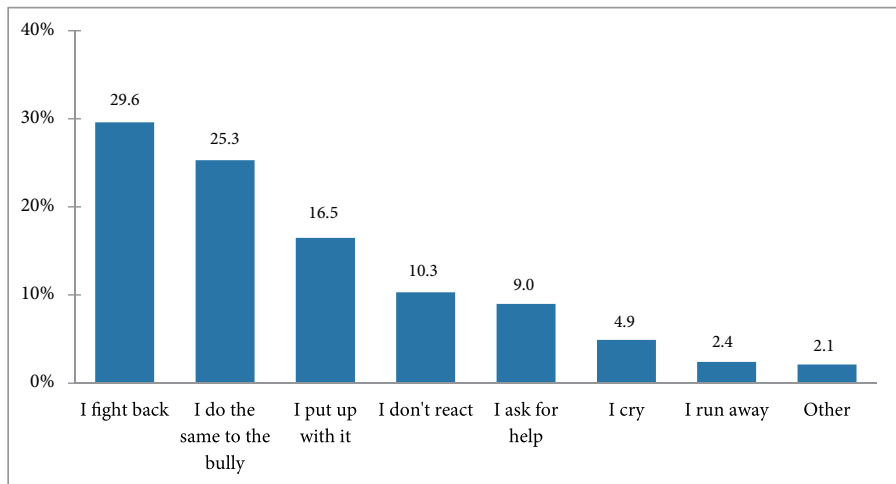


Figure 10: Reactions when bullied

The relative importance of reactions to bullying is showed in Figure 10. Percentages have been calculated excluding non-responses and show that the most “popular” reaction is “fight back” (almost 30% of the responses), followed by “I do the same to those who attack me” (25%); thus, more than half the pupils are willing to use the “eye for an eye” rule. Some will react asking rescue from adults (9%) and the rest exhibit passive reactions: “I put up with it” (16.5%) and “I don’t react” (10.3%) sum to nearly a quarter of respondents; adding 4.9% and 2.4% that will cry or run away, one third would thus practically not react at all.

Table 14: What do you think when bullied by age/kind of school, gender and nationality/ethnic background

Think	General	Age/Kind of school		Gender		Nationality/Ethnic background		
		Primary	Secondary	Male	Female	Italian	European	Non-European
Getting revenge	43.2	42.8	43.7	50.4	34.4	43.1	45.0	41.5
Trying to stop bullying in school	40.5	41.3	39.4	36.0	46.4	41.8	50.0	20.8
Putting up with it	25.8	29.2	21.6	26.4	25.5	26.4	11.7	37.7
Changing to another school	4.4	6.1	2.3	4.2	4.8	3.3	6.7	9.4
Skipping school	3.1	3.8	2.3	3.8	2.4	2.5	1.7	9.4
Other	8.2	10.2	5.6	4.9	11.5	7.7	11.7	7.5

Taking into account that pupils could choose more than one answer from a list, two answers stand out from all the others, being selected by more than 40% of respondents as regards “what do you think when bullied”. They reveal two completely opposite “prospective” reactions: search for revenge and thinking what could be done to change the situation in the school. More than a quarter think there is no other way than acceptance; acceptance; less than 10% think about changing school or even dropping out.

Although there is not much difference according to type of school, changing or skipping school (chosen by a minority of pupils), is more than doubled in the primary schools; “resignation” is also more frequent (Table 14). Looking at gender differences, “getting revenge” is the choice of more than half the male pupils, and just a little more than one third of females. Finally, for “putting up with it”, we notice a striking difference between the two groups of non-Italian pupils (about 12% among the other Europeans and more of one third among non-Europeans). This is confirmed by the fact that other Europeans pupils are more convinced that something might be done to stop bullying (50%), while non-Europeans are much less convinced (20.8%).

TEACHERS’ ATTITUDES TOWARD CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Promotion of interculturality, respect for others, tolerance, are a substantial part of teachers’ activity. In general, teachers do not miss an opportunity to promote the understanding of diversity through adherence to specific projects or the adoption of different methods of teaching (which provide a comprehensive approach to discipline); or even through activities aiming at developing a stronger concern in their pupils for different cultures and fostering mutual coexistence.

“The teacher rather than explaining to us... make us watch many videos on the cultures and countries of other people.” (m, 10)

Similar results are recorded with respect to the statement that in class they learn about different cultures and religions: “agree” or “strongly agree” over 70% of respondents. Strong agreement is strikingly more frequent in primary schools, although this is partially compensated by simple agreement. On the other side of the scale, disagreement reaches about 10% and is more diffuse in secondary schools (over 15%, compared to less than 5% in primary school).

Respondents were also asked to comment on the claim that activities are conducted in their school to encourage students to be equal and to understand about differences. Nearly 40% “strongly agree” and almost 30% simply “agree”;

primary school children being definitely much more in favour of the first response are (almost 60%) than those attending secondary school (only 16%).

Unluckily, not all teachers are able to create a favourable environment for mutual exchange and tolerance, either because they themselves do not have adequate training or because they were motivated in their actions by different and sometimes opposing values. In these cases, a mutual exchange occurs between students and teachers and the strength and the ability of the students within the institution seems to encourage their teachers to adopt appropriate role behaviours:

“Have you ever witnessed or suffered acts of physical or verbal violence?”

“Yes, it happened once that a teacher insulted two students because they were foreigners saying that they should go back to wherever they came from and used offensive words against them... They were silent, because I think it was not the first time that they suffered such things. I think that their parents had told them to remain silent and endure.” (f, 18)

“Do you think their family helped them or not in this situation?”

“I do not think that to suffer in silence was the right choice. They should have defended their nationality, their being.” (m, 18)

“Did your classmates take their defence or stay silent?”

“Actually, they called the professor ignorant. He was silent because he did not expect his pupils to respond that way.” (f, 18)

“Were the guys who took their defence foreign or Italian?”

“There were some Italians too, but most of them were foreigners...” (f, 18)

The environment perceived by teachers is distinctly multicultural. Teachers show a positive attitude towards a multicultural reality, where tolerance and respect within the school environment seem to be constant. If the world outside can be characterised by social exclusion, in schools these behaviours appear to be isolated and stigmatised. According to respondents, school curricula, activities and intercultural projects and the efforts of many teachers contribute to promote a suitable setting where differences are transformed into human enrichment and violence tends to vanish.

“No, I have to say with great satisfaction that we have never noticed incidents of interethnic violence. It should also be noted that, ours being a high school, boys come here with an experience acquired during their years at the primary and middle school and most kids who attend our school are students already accustomed to intercultural education programs and are used to living surrounded by people of various nationalities, some of them already from their primary school years. In high schools, at the moment, we often meet students who do not speak Italian but who belong to the second generation of immigrants, having been born here [...]. These projects that are now a cornerstone of the Italian school are essential. These same projects, in my opinion, have meant that this is now the widespread atmosphere, the atmosphere perceived by kids in school.” (teacher, secondary school)

The environment perceived by those who work in schools as experts instead is very different. According to them, Italian schools are losing their ability to welcome and are experiencing a sort of multicultural strain, with all the consequences related to different customs and cultures, in many cases producing serious problems of conflict management. They complain that attendance of refresher courses for teachers is no longer mandatory. As a consequence, most teachers (with some noticeable exceptions) are no longer trained to face the challenges of cultural diversity. Even the training of the trainers is seriously flawed and inadequate to meeting the real needs of Italian schools today. At the moment many classes are widely heterogeneous. Conflicts and difficulties in managing them are not easily overcome by teachers and organisational structures.

“We must identify the main problems that a teacher is facing in the context, let me say, of a culturally enlarged school. Rather than speaking of issues of interculturalism, it is proper to say that the teacher now should do his job with an enlarged culturally perspective. Problems are still numerous and, above all, interwoven; it is impossible to keep them separated, especially now that the school has a very different cultural identity from the recent past; a school where there are kids with very different curricula, whereas in the previous educational system skills were fairly standardised so that everyone, especially in the secondary and in the high school, followed a rather homogenous path.” (educator)

Asked to agree or disagree with the statement “teachers treat pupils in the same way regardless of their nationality/ethnic background”, about 40% of students strongly believe things are this way, and 22.8% simply agree. Less than 14% of

responses are located in between agreement and disagreement; therefore, only less than a quarter of the students somewhat believe that teachers (at least some of them) discriminate against pupils. The positive attitude of teachers is reported especially in primary schools (Figure 11).

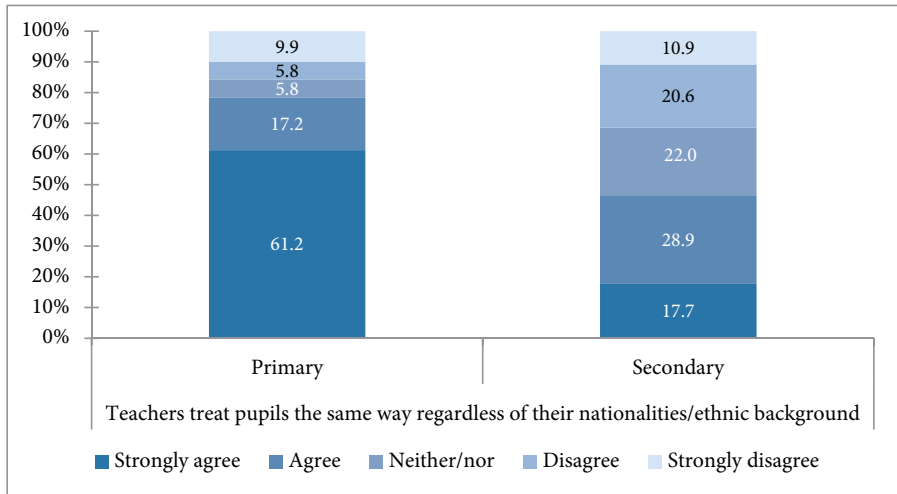


Figure 11: Teachers treat pupils the same way by age/kind of school

Conclusions

Violence between peers in school is a common phenomenon, though not very widespread, that has its genesis in cultural diversity together with other factors such as differences in status or gender. An individual act of violence breaks out even in the absence of a good cause and is aimed at the construction of the group's identity. The identification of the victim is functional to the group's definition through ethnic or gender elements that help to the affirmation of one's national identity or sexual orientation. The victim is thus a powerful catalyst of the energies of the group. The main violent acts range from insults to humiliation, including physical assaults such as spitting (spitting is widespread since it conveys intense contempt), punching, kicking etc. (these last facts occurring much more rarely).

Violence among peers is often triggered by factors or events outside the school community: interethnic wars, established tribal feuds etc. but, above all, by local incidents (theft, robbery, rape etc.) All these exacerbate the relationships between the different nationalities since the media spread the news in a stereotyped way

particularly whenever the offender belongs to another culture. In some vocational and technical schools, where the presence of children of migrants is relevant, the excessive concentration of culturally diverse groups fuels tensions activating an fiery and harsh competition on the expectations of future employment of young students in the labour market.

In the phenomenon of bullying, the identification of the victim is a crucial aspect. The group is structured around power relations and is valued by some particular attributes (ethnic or of other kinds) and identifies his victim in a weak and isolated subject. The psychological aspects are fundamental. In many cases, temperamentally problematic children are targeted. The non-Italian may be the target of the attack while displaying shyness, language difficulties and isolation. In many cases, non-Italian children do not enjoy the same protection as Italian children and therefore are more easily subjected to violence because they are not supported in their rights by their families.

Bullies on the other hand show themselves to possess many skills with which they insinuate themselves into the human soul and are supported by strong stereotypes to reinforce their dominant positions. They have often been the victims of violence themselves and, having experienced it, they fear it.

The most common sites of violence are outside the school, the world of the Internet and especially the public places where young people meet, in particular the parks.

The perception of the school is good. The school is still respected and behaviours of boys and girls are modelled according to institutional expectations. In short, the school is an institution and has all the components values and norms of an institution. At school, the atmosphere is good. Children feel protected and also feel they can develop their personalities in order to interact properly with their classmates. The presence of many teachers who are motivated to develop intercultural topics such as human rights and social inclusion means that many schools are running intercultural projects that stimulate reflection on diversity and lead to a greater awareness of individual rights.

Thanks to these experiences, and with the help of many teachers, students are likely to recognise the other elements of diversity without giving positive or negative judgments. An individual is considered as a carrier of difference and judged on his behaviour and his personality. He or she is a person and his or her belonging to one culture or the other is not so relevant.

Interethnic violence, when it occurs, aims at all ethnic groups as its target in an undifferentiated way. The only but important exception here concerns Roma people, since they are identified as a target even if they are living sedentary lives.

Another relevant category subjected to discrimination and social exclusion is that of children adopted from other countries (especially those with dark skin) who suffer from the same kind of stereotyping, in spite of their Italian citizenship, and who are often particularly fragile and emotionally affected by any racist behaviour. This typology has not been considered in the quantitative analysis of the research.

When episodes of violence occur between peers, it is necessary to talk about it. There is nothing worse than accepting that violence breeds violence and allowing it to be seen as a normal experience of life. It's necessary to go deep into the facts and understand the actions of the individuals involved. For internal reasons, violence triggers escalation mechanisms. For this reason the response behaviours of the victim may lead to the activation of other similar and often more intense behaviours by the aggressor. Both primary school students and those in high school were very appreciative of the focus group, used it as a tool to spread knowledge and found in it a place where they could express themselves and engage with experts about their experiences, their emotions, etc. Young people have a great need to talk and discuss with each other led by someone who can get them to share their emotions.

Teachers play a vital role as educators and often represent a point of reference. They are moral figures and objects of identification. They should never forget their educational mission, which, according to the expectations of the students, should go far beyond the simple transmission of factual knowledge.

When incidents of violence occur, the teachers who are aware usually react with effectiveness. Their principals are kept informed (especially if the facts are relevant) and an itinerary of accompaniment with parents and sometimes with the local social services begins. It's very difficult to talk about bullying. It is necessary to always find the right words to create an effective relationship with parents who otherwise stiffen or even kick back, sometimes trying to assert that the victim is the aggressor, maybe through an official complaint. The parents of non-Italian students do not have these tools and often do not have the competence to solve the behavioural problems of their children. Unfortunately, not all the teachers are able to display a proper attitude towards coping with violent acts due to a specific training gap. There should be a return to a national policy that gives priority to the training of teachers in terms of relational skills rather than a policy that encourages competitiveness and individualism.

Prevention of interethnic violence requires, as a necessary (though perhaps not sufficient) condition, that children can internalise the values of coexistence, tolerance and equality. Our society is increasingly atomised and lacking in specific

cultural references. Through targeted actions, a model of existence free from violence may be proposed to fill the void of culture that prevents many young people from exploring positively the world.

There is a widespread need to communicate and to talk about violence, to create an environment in which to confront issues of diversity.

During the study, we noticed strong demands for positive action too. Among these, much importance is given to intercultural programs offered by the schools and also to programs of direct intervention, such as those developed by the *Comunità di Sant' Egidio*, in order to keep the young out from the spiral of violence and racism. They have offices in many parts of the country and go into schools where there are problems and organise meetings among the children. They also organise a "School for Peace" that consists in after-school clubs, where kids can share their views freely. Prevention of violence is also brought about through appropriate coercive methods and direct actions of the institutions. With regard to appropriate coercive methods, an interesting judicial process is that which is proposed by the President of the Juvenile Court of Trieste. It assumes that it is legitimate to apply to bullying the same legal instruments that in Italy are applied to stalking. Bullying in fact is certainly a kind of "persecutory behaviour" that makes life impossible for the victim and offends his/her dignity as a person. These actions do not always consist of real crimes but, according to the new Italian law, they turn into a crime because of their repetition: taken one by one, they have an almost irrelevant and insignificant penal value but represent a thread of a real bullying harassment when sewn together.

Therefore, the law on stalking (concerning adult behaviour) can lead to an effective preventive action carried out by the police before coming to the court, thus having an approach where the punitive option is not primary, but absolutely residual. In this particular application of the law on stalking, a particular aspect plays an important role: prevention is not assigned to a judicial body, but to a public security organ, the chief of police. By preventing the crime, he in fact exercises the function of public safety, combined with the function of the judicial police. What really matters is what the chief of police can do when he is reported a case of bullying or of other oppressive behaviour. He can summon the parents of bullies and even the same guys and give them a speech of admonition to warn them that the facts that have been exposed constitute a framework of harassment.

A method of direct action for the prevention of risk behaviours and promoting the welfare of young people is exposed in a Memorandum of understanding signed by the Juvenile Court of Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Municipality of Monfalcone,

several schools and territorial educational agencies, local law enforcement institutions (Police, *Carabinieri*, Financial Police) and the Foundation Savings Bank of Gorizia, The Memorandum is inspired by the same abovementioned principles and aims at knowing the characteristics of the phenomenon, fostering collaboration and increasing dialogue between schools and institutions in order to curb violent behaviours.²⁸

28 The contribution of authors is as follows: Introduction and Conclusion: *Delli Zotti - Urpis*; Immigration in Italy, The Italian School System and the Presence of Non-Italian Pupils, The Italian Legislation on Minorities and Minors, The Integration of Non-Italian Pupils into Italian Schools, Methodology of the Research, Support and Help in Schools: *Delli Zotti*; Citizenship and Nationality, Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity, Multiculturalism and Interculturalism, Cultural Diversity and the Principle of Equality, Perception and Evaluation of Cultural Diversity, Open - Mindedness towards Cultural Diversity, Safety Inside the School, Bullying, Aggressors and Victims, Types of Violent Actions, Reactions to Bullying, Victims' Reactions to Bullying, Teachers' Attitudes towards Cultural Diversity: *Urpis*.

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One of the features of the book is that it presents the issue of interethnic and intercultural violence in a comprehensive way through multidimensional approach and perspectives of experts, school staff and experiences of children themselves. It is therefore an important contribution to understanding the interethnic violence in schools in complex and culturally plural realities of five European countries at a time when Europe is facing the “crisis of multiculturalism” and questioning the intercultural coexistence.

From the review of Dr. Mojca Pajnik

The book provides a valuable insight into the specific issue of interethnic peer violence in schools that is still largely an under-researched phenomenon. It examines the mutual perceptions and levels of communication among school children, parents and school personnel and analyses the capacities of societies and educational systems in different European countries to ensure and promote respect and acceptance. All these actors share responsibility for ensuring a tolerant environment in schools where cultural and ethnic differences are not an excuse for discrimination but are accepted, appreciated and promoted. Promoting interculturalism and addressing interethnic relations in education contributes to the development of a foundation for common understanding and the creation of an open, pluralistic and cohesive society. This book represents an important step towards these goals, which – in troubled times – have to be stressed again and again.

From the review of Dr. Tanja Renner



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