



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
AND ECONOMICS

**SAPIENZA**  
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

**ISSN 2532 -117X**

**Working papers**

**DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE  
SOCIALI ED ECONOMICHE**

**PhD COURSE IN  
APPLIED SOCIAL SCIENCES  
WORKING PAPERS SERIES  
n. 10/2020**

**Sequential use of qualitative and quantitative  
methods for studying LGBTQs.  
Carrying out interviews to draft a survey**

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# Sequential use of qualitative and quantitative methods for studying LGBTQs.

## Carrying out interviews to draft a survey

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*Planning a survey about LGBTQ entails answering to an important question: what is the best way to ask about sexual orientation, gender identity and all other issues related thereto? International literature warns about drafting questionnaire complexity, because of sensitive questions, such as self-perception, homophobia and discriminatory events. Asking information in a proper way can be a scrupulous job and that is the reason why, in our case, qualitative interviews on LGBTQ people have been carried out before the questionnaire drafting phase.*

*Semi-structured interviews allowed a part of the survey target population to actively contribute in writing questions, on which the survey is based. Interviews give to the analysis the added value of the direct experience. Moreover, they give to the research project the methodological strength of the sequential use of qualitative and quantitative methods, in a pragmatic perspective of combining both methods.*

### INTRODUCTION

Designing a questionnaire is not at all trivial. Identifying the aspects to investigate, writing questions able to argue or to confute the research hypothesis, choosing a questions order which does not influence the interviewee, are just some of the several best practices proposed in literature to researchers who are planning a survey (Gobo, 2015). If a survey deals with LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual and Queer people) the methodological attention needs to take into account further increases. In 2012 the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) carried out the European Union LGBT survey, probably the most important statistical survey ever conducted in this field. The technical report of the survey focuses on the importance of the consultation and of the careful examination of the final version of the questionnaire to be submitted to the users. FRA coordinated and supervised the consultation process, with the aim of drafting and sharpening the questionnaire, collaborating with the LGBT community; the process focused on terminology, contents, layout and question order, leading to the final version of an on-line questionnaire submitted to LGBT people spread in 28 European countries.

Following the FRA recommendations (and those of other organizations which carried out important sociological quantitative studies about LGBT, introduced in the next paragraph) several semi-

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structured interviews have been carried out. These interviews aim to identify some issues in addressing on-line questionnaire drafting. The research project is aimed at submitting this questionnaire to all those Instagram users, listed by a web-scraping software (Schröder, 2018), who tag their pictures with some of the most common hashtags among the LGBTQ community. The goal interviews is to detect and identify the thornier subjects in LGBTQ people daily life.

Working on a social network like Instagram allows us to study the LGBTQ community in an innovative way, bypassing the associative activities that, until now, have been the main source of knowledge in this research field (Barbagli and Colombo, 2007). Moreover, working on Instagram makes it possible to reach a huge number of users, belonging to the target population, in an easy, inexpensive and efficient way.

Referring to LGBTQ as a population, thus overlooking the heterogeneity of the groups that the acronym identifies, can be strongly inappropriate. Thereafter we will refer to LGBTQ adding an “s”, within brackets, following the word population: this *population(s)* will represent, with all its inner multi-sidedness, our target population.

This paper explains the preparatory phase of the research project, entitled *Over the rainbow*, the most important studies, both national and international, carried out on LGBTQ but mainly the qualitative approach employed to strengthen the quantitative one, making more appropriate the questionnaire and therefore more reliable data coming from the survey.

## SURVEYS ABOUT LGBTQ AND QUALITATIVE EXPERIENCES IN THE DRAFTING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Quantitative investigation of LGBTQ social features is still in its infancy in Italy, as in several other countries. The reason for this lack of knowledge is linked to the intrinsic complexity of this population(s), the rarity of the involved phenomena, and the elusive people making up this community (De Rosa and Inglese, 2018). These problematic aspects entail research difficulties, both at the methodological and epistemological level, which are indissolubly linked to the dichotomies male/female and heterosexual/homosexual, on which people have been categorized for decades but that today do not fit anymore with our complex society (Ruspini, 2014; Mieli, 2002). Hyper-gendered categories such as “males” and “females,” “brothers” and “sisters,” and “husbands” and “wives” are not enough: social surveys need to rethink the measurement of sex and gender to not reproduce statistical representations that erase important dimensions of variation, and likely limit understanding of the processes that perpetuate social inequality (Westbrook and Saperstein, 2015).

For a long time, associations represented the main informative source on the LGBTQ community, promoting and partnering the main studies (Barbagli and Colombo, 2007). An important contribution to this field can be found in the mixed methods research application, which is a strategy to use and combine quantitative and qualitative approaches (Johnson 2016; Creswell, Plano Clarc 2007). Although mixed methods research increased the understanding of the LGBTQ population(s) -despite some limits, given their local and circumscribed nature- the quantitative studies, have been few and mostly of experimental nature. Only recently national institutes of statistics and official research centres started A project with the aim of estimating the LGBTQ population(s), and its socio-demographic profiles. Besides the European Union LGBT survey conducted by the FRA, already mentioned in the previous paragraph, the most important international work in this field has been carried out in Italy, Germany, United Kingdom and the

United States: in 2011, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) conducted a survey about “gender discrimination, sexual orientation and ethnic belonging”, with the Italian Minister of Equal Opportunities; the survey attempted to investigate, through some questions, the respondents’ sexual orientations and for homosexual and bisexual people, their coming-out experience and possible discriminations against them. In Germany, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (FADA) conducted in 2017 a survey to find out more about discriminatory behaviour and in which areas people are experiencing discrimination and how people cope with it. In the same year, the UK government conducted a nationwide survey which asked LGBT and intersex people for their views on public services and about their experiences. In the USA, a Survey of “LGBT Americans: attitudes, Experiences and Values in Changing Times” was carried out in 2013 by the Pew, an independent study centre which conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, and other empirical social science research.

Methodological reports of most of these surveys alert the complexity of drafting a questionnaire on sensitive subjects, such as sexual orientation and gender identity, self-perception and homophobia: writing questions, choosing their sort, picking the words used to ask them is a scrupulous job. Several international experiences suggest drafting the questionnaire with a consultation process based on qualitative methodologies, such as focus groups among researchers (Green, 2011; Pew Research Centre, 2013). This process, although methodologically convincing, would not directly represent the personal experience of the LGBTQ people; it would propose survey schemes already used and inevitably linked to associations world. That is the reason to conduct semi-structured interviews and to draft a questionnaire, letting concerned LGBTQ people able to address the survey according to their experiences and from their insider point of view.

## QUALITATIVE Vs. QUANTITATIVE: CONSIDERING THE CONTRAPOSITION TO BETTER UNDERSTAND GENDER AND DIGITAL MATTERS

The present research project is based on two main theoretical frameworks: gender studies and digital sociology.

Dealing with LGBTQ implies adopting that multidisciplinary theoretical perspective (concerning several academic fields, such as sociology, philosophy and psychology), called gender studies, which started to denaturalize reproductive roles among individuals belonging to a society, to make a distinction amongst sex, gender and sexual orientation (Butler 2015; Connell 2013; Ruspini 2014).

On the other hand, working on a social network necessarily includes topics such as digitalization and all those relationships between humans and web technology (Snee et al., 2016): for the social researcher, the Digital (Instagram, in our case) becomes a new social space subjectifying, self-expressive and free, though subject to its netiquettes (Snee et al., 2016). The Digital can also become an empirical research tool, because it allows to select individuals (according to what they post) for a survey, one of the most common methods of social research. Moreover, Digital becomes a research field of interest too, because it entails considering not entirely negligible effects on society (Ruppert et al., 2013).

These two important and broad frameworks are deeply interconnected and, in the last twenty years, Gender Studies interested in new technology and digital devices have frequently underlined that gender is neither something that “one has” nor something that “one is”, but something that “one does” and “says” (Cozza, 2008). In the Information and Knowledge Society, everyone contributes in differentiating social expectations based on sexual identity and no-one can be represented

anymore with rusty traditional binary definitions, which steered the sociological debate till fifty years ago, both from a theoretical and methodological point of view. Talking about sexual orientation, dividing people into heterosexual and homosexual categories is not enough anymore, analogously, in methodological terms to distinguish categorically in qualitative and quantitative research is not enough either.

Rossmann and Wilson proposed, as early as 1985, that quantitative and qualitative methods can be combined in a single evaluation study, to better understand the phenomenon in question, according to three main perspectives on combining methods:

- the purist approach where the two methods are seen as mutually exclusive,
- the situationalist approach that views them as separate but equal,
- the pragmatist approach that suggests integration is possible.

From the pragmatist position, it is argued that either method can be used at the analysis stage to corroborate, elaborate or validate findings from the other methods.

In social science research literature, the use of multiple methods is usually described with several different names: multi-method/multi-trait (Campbell and Fiske, 1959), convergent validation, or triangulation (Webb et al, 1999). These various notions share the conception that qualitative and quantitative methods should be viewed as complementary rather than competitive. Jick, in 1983, underscores the desirability of mixing methods given the strengths and weaknesses found in single method designs. Mainly for planning a survey, whose purpose is to elucidate causal relationships or even to provide descriptive statistics, qualitative methods should be used to ensure that the questionnaire contains all the right questions, asked in the right way (Gable, 1994). Moreover, designing a survey about LGBTQ without exploiting the informative richness feature of qualitative methods can lead to a misleading questionnaire and then to not robust results, a synonym of a partial and patchy knowledge of the phenomena.

In this context, a pragmatic approach which sequentially combines qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews) and a quantitative survey has been used. In this way, the depth of the information collected during interviews become the starting point for an efficient, functional and informative questionnaire.

## QUALITATIVE FOR QUANTITATIVE: INTERVIEWS FOR DESIGNING A SURVEY

According to the importance of applying qualitative methodologies preparatory for a survey, introduced and discussed in previous paragraphs, 6 people belonging to different LGBTQ population(s) groups, have been interviewed: two young lesbian women, one of which defines herself as queer, three gay men and a FtoM transsexual person. Interviewed people have been selected in a non-probabilistic way, trying to find different people in terms of age, job, social background, educational levels and involvement level in any LGBTQ associations.

Each were asked which aspects of daily life to investigate and how, taking into account the question sensitivity and the complexity of gender identity and sexual orientation issues (Ruspini, 2014).

Interviews have been conducted letting interviewed people express themselves as freely as possible, instead strictly organizing questions. The following topics are proposed for discussion during the interviews:

- interactions on/with social networks

- belonging to LGBTQ community, associations and participation in their activities
- homotransphobic behaviours to investigate, and how
- how to ask about self-perception, according to the main definitions of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.

Every interview lasted about one hour and they have been conducted sometimes in university rooms, sometimes in bookshops or bars. Interviewed people accepted being recorded and quoted in the research project framework, in scientific publications or a PhD thesis. In the following paragraphs, fictitious names are used in quoting interviewed people and in reporting what they said.

## FINDINGS POINTED OUT BY INTERVIEWS

Interviewed people, discussing the above topics, highlighted recurring themes, despite their differences in terms of age, employment, social background, educational levels but also, and above all, sex, gender and sexual orientation, which define them in the LGBTQ community. These recurring themes have been theoretically analyzed, regarding the two main frameworks on which this research project grounds: gender and digitalization.

This analysis pointed out several important issues which addressed, in a theoretical way, the questions proposed in the survey and how they have been asked.

### *HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES CHANGED LGBTQ COMMUNITY DAILY LIFE*

The first field emerging through interviews, talking about the relationship between LGBTQ and the new technologies, is the revolutionary impact generated by dating-apps: Grindr, Her, Tinder, just to mention a few which are widely used, mainly among gay men. They enormously increased possibilities of easily meeting new people, knowing in advance their sexual orientation, interests, location and all the other characteristics important to know when meeting a new person (Card et al., 2017; Grov et al., 2014).

When asked interviewed people how many of their LGBTQ acquaintances use, or have used, a dating app all of them answered with percentages between 80 and 95%. Giorgio explains to us the main advantages of using this kind of app and the reasons for their success:

*I downloaded Grindr because a friend of mine suggested it to me [...] in that period I was complaining about the indifference of people, nobody looks at you and nobody winks anymore, everyone with their smartphones, so I asked him “how can I pick up someone?” and he answered me “why don’t you try with Grindr?” and so I tried and it was great [...] the aim was to meet up in real life, according to the proximity between two people. In Grindr the distance is really important: you geolocalize yourself and you say “hey, I am here and I can move in this range to meet up” because if I wanted a pen friend I would accept him in Australia too, but I need a real person and I need the contact with him.*

Luca confirms what Giorgio says, according to the importance of knowing the gender, the sexual orientation and especially where the person you are meeting is. He argues:

*I have lived during the smartphones and dating apps dawn. geolocalization was an unbelievable thing before [...] when I was younger there were some chats to talk on*

*PCs but then, since 2007/2008 with the arrival of smartphones, dating apps like Grindr took dominance. It is like a closed social network with the aim of meeting, not only for having sex... for example I met Emanuele on Grindr and we have been engaged since 2012*

Transgender people took advantage of social networking websites not only for meeting but also for searching and sharing information, difficult to find before: in many Facebook groups it is possible to ask tips and suggestions about transition and on YouTube there are several channels about the same subject. Emi is the admin of one of these Facebook group. He founded it to share information with people looking for the support he wanted in the past and that was hard to find. This is what he told us:

*We have a group called FtoM e MtoF tips, about doctors, endocrinologists, etc is a Facebook page in which people looking for suggestions can ask whatever; there is also a post-transition group in which people ask things like “It is happening this...what about you?” Some years ago everything was more difficult, I thought to be the only one on this planet to experience some things. I thought “why I did it?!” Nowadays social networks make it easier because you know what you are going to do. In 2014 I found out much info about transition, really difficult to get some years before: now you can find someone able to help you if you need it.*

Technology, said to encourage people to always be online and thus colder and blasé in the real daily life, does not seem to penalize socialization. On the contrary, although in ways characterizing our informational capitalism age (Castells, 2002). Today society is presented with a way of meeting people different from some years ago. Geolocalization undoubtedly represents the main advantage of dating app: the possibility of knowing who are close and inclined to meet up makes our devices to “perform” users bodies, feelings and desires (Butler, 2015) but at the same time dating apps construct gender just as a rigid category that has more to do with a matching profile function than with identity (MacLeod and McArthur, 2018)

This new socialization ease has brought a decreasing participation in all those activities, mainly sponsored by LGBTQ associations, whose aim was to promote socialization between people sharing the same sexual orientation, such as cineforum, disco events or soirées in gay-bars (Ross et al., 2014). This side-effect of new technology introduction, confirmed by a member of the board of the roman LGBTQ association named after “Mario Mieli”, is perceived by respondents. This what Chiara told me about the decrease in socialization activities promoted by associations:

*I don't know if associations are growing, although the important work they have carried out in recent years, mainly in suburbs and in small towns, because social networks make all of us more and more isolated: you can think that your field of action is comparable to a collective, but it is not, and maybe some people think that it's useless to be part of an association to lobby.*

LGBTQ associations nevertheless remain fundamental as political pressure institutions on the front of civil rights recognition and to fight homotransphobia (Barbagli and Colombo, 2007). The associationism prestige thus has not decreased, but has stabilized, as has happened to all other institutions involved in political activism, such as political parties or trade unions (Simon Rosser et

al., 2008). Individualistic drift, deepened by new technologies in daily life, still don't work in a political struggle where the self, political subject, becomes "us" in public (Butler, 2015). Online social networks are not only used to organize encounters but also to correspond and sometimes to endorse positions, by sharing it. Carlotta told us in her interview that the Internet was her first interlocutor when she realized her sexual orientation and it soothed her:

*When I realised this "thing" [sexual attraction for same-sex people] I remember some lesbian girls suggested to me a Facebook page, actually is a magazine, called Lezpop. I remember it was reassuring so I followed the page, but without liking it, because I was afraid someone could discover it...*

Sometimes social networks are used to read and then to share positions. This kind of endorsement often does not coincide with a traditional political activism, like that one carried out by associations. Many LGBTQ people usually attend main events in person, such as the Pride. Social networks become a "megaphone" from which everyone can shout their political commitment, trying to involve as many people as possible. Interviewed people declared feeling part of LGBTQ community mainly during grieving and pride moments, but not really in daily life: social networking web-sites fill this gap, integrating everyday life with the sharing of information, contacts or events, contributing in constituting a new way of political attitude and democratic participation (Zhang et al., 2010).

According to what has emerged in interviews, about the relationship between digital technologies and LGBTQ community, several findings pointed out have been "operationalized" in the questionnaire (see Appendix), through specific questions, both about social media and dating apps, such as:

- "Which social network do you use, between Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, others? how often?",
- "With which device do you log in?",
- "Which social network do you use, among Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others to post videos and pictures, to be informed, to chat, and to follow people?",
- "What do you think about social media?" (5-levels Likert scale applied to a set of sentences),
- "Have you ever used social network to support the LGBTQ community? which one between Facebook, Twitter, Instagram?",
- "Is your sexual orientation deductible by your social media profile?",
- "Have you ever used dating apps?",
- "Have you ever hang out with someone met on a dating app?",
- "Do you have a public profile on dating apps or a closed one?",
- "If you stopped using dating apps, why did you stop?",

Moreover, several other questions have been introduced in the questionnaire to understand (also through Likert scale) the relationship between LGBTQs and associations, mainly to clarify if the "belonging" concept has changed over years, also and foremost due to the social network advent.

- "Do you frequent LGBTQ associations?"
- "Do you frequent gay-bars or LGBTQ disco nights?"



- “What do you think about social media and associations?” (Likert scale applied to a set of sentences),
- “Do you feel an integral part of the LGBTQ community?”
- “Which LGBTQ claims do you agree with (same-sex marriages, adoptions, homotransphobia crime, etc.)?”
- “Have you ever been to a Pride?”

#### *GENDER MATTERS: SELF-PERCEPTION AND DISCRIMINATION WITHIN LGBTQ*

One of the most important topics of the interview was the way of asking through questionnaires about sex, gender identity and sexual orientation: how many and which modalities we need to consider in order to analyze the heterogeneity and the complexity of the LGBTQ population(s)? Interviewed people showed a “conscious disinterest” on this matter: they responded that the high variety of definitions, related both to gender identity and to sexual orientation, has been useful till today to show to the world, hegemonically heterosexual, the strong versatility of the LGBTQ community; but today the proliferation of definitions is not so essential to understand the key characteristics of the LGBTQ people. This is what Luca said about the umbrella term LGBTQ:

*I don't feel it like a label, or a bad thing. It's just an acronym, enlarging more and more, sometimes in a paroxysmal way, including really different worlds.*

About the choice of modalities to insert in the self-perception questions Luca adds:

*I don't like all this politically correct terminology, for example, I don't like to use asterisks to say “salve a tutt\*”*

From the interviews, it clearly emerges that Gender is performed in the daily life, fluid and so that it's not right to categorize it in a binary way (Butler, 1990); but at the same time it is not right to try to categorize it in several other ways and of being afraid to use the wrong definition. For this reason, the term queer is used more and more often by all those people who feel to have a gender or sexual identity out-of-the-box, according to the rule laid down by society (Hughes, 2006; Ahmed, 2006). Chiara endorses this queer thinking:

*Queer is an English word which means weird, strange, it was a denigrating word to identify those who didn't represent the heterosexuality with a reproductive aim: every deviance was queer. I have had experiences with boys (never again!) but I don't consider myself a bisexual person. I'm a lesbian, queer woman. I give a political value to this definition, according to the queer thinking of refusing society's mandatory duty of giving birth.*

The attention to all the gender declinations (transgender, intersex, etc.) and to all the sexual orientations (pansexual, polisexual, asexual, etc.) seems to be, for the interviewed people, excessive, redundant and often also “too politically correct” (Redattore Sociale, 2013). Nevertheless, terminology attention could be very important for some people. On that basis it was agreed to leave an open answer option, to make everyone as free as possible to define herself/himself in the questions about gender identity, sexual orientation and in all the other related questions. Giorgio ironically offered this suggestion:

*I am gay and I feel male. I have never denied it. Anyway, some people want to feel neutral, how to treat them? I suggest you to consider a modality “other”*

Accordingly interviews pointed out sex, gender identity and sexual orientation were combined effortlessly with other socio-demographic variables, proposing an open option to leave everyone free to define herself/himself.

The modalities proposed for sex were male, female, or intersex. For gender identity were male, female, transgender or “queer, gender-fluid, non-binary” and the open option “other”. For sexual orientation the options were asexual, bisexual, heterosexual, homosexual, and the open option to define it freely. Obviously, categorizing gender identity and sexual orientation through a few-options answer could be reductive, but useful, mainly in a MAWI<sup>2</sup>-oriented survey, which requires a simple and feasible questionnaire. Anyway, the “other” option guarantees everyone the opportunity of self-definition.

The questionnaire continues with a Likert-scale question about the self-perception of gender identity and sexual orientation, which aims to understand how LGBTQ population(s) live these concepts.

Finally, a set of coming-out questions ask who was the first to know the sexual orientation of the interviewed person (none, someone in the household, friends, colleagues, etc.) and who knows it right now. The difference between the first and the others underlines the people who can be unconditionally trusted, mainly in youth, and people who need more time to be completely trusted.

The last part of the interviews was about sexual discrimination, how it happens and the way to investigate it. Interviewed people suggested how to make question on this sensitive field. This is what Chiara suggested:

*I would divide discrimination into 3 types: family, job, strangers. When you come out, or you don't but someone suspects you are queer, discriminatory behaviour could occur: old friends start to procrastinate to meet you or they stop contacting you, but also worse things, like sons or daughters kicked out by their parents. Then I think about discrimination in employment: lots of people have lost their job because of their sexual orientation. And finally there are discriminating behaviour of strangers who insult or attack LGBTQ people in the streets.*

During interviews, discrimination has been often described as a set of behaviours less violent than expected but not less agonizing. One behaviour above all, i.e. “ghosting”, namely the situation in which friends, relatives and colleagues disappear from the life of a person who comes out (Spitale, 2015), as told by Carlotta:

*Some people drifted away over time, my ex-boyfriend hates me: he didn't find out from me and we have never had a discussion about it, he simply distanced himself from me, all the contacts, cancelled [by all the social networks]*

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<sup>2</sup> MAWI stands for Mobile Assisted Web Interview, a questionnaire that could be easily filled out using a mobile device, such as smartphones or tablets.

Giorgio said that ghosting can be also stronger in the family environment:

*Family discrimination is really strong because it's difficult to be indifferent with people you are often in contact with: brothers, brothers in law... you start to feel something negative in their behaviour, they stop leaving their children with you, I mean, your nephews... you start to understand that you are being avoided, not invited to the family gathering, and so on... your relatives start to be afraid that you may influence the sexual orientation of their children...*

Discrimination matters assume a characteristic dimension for transsexual people more than all the other topics touched during interviews. Using healthcare, long-lasting transition, slow bureaucracy put at a discrimination risk many transsexual people, mainly MtoF ones. Circumstances of discriminatory events which transsexuals feel the most is undoubtedly on the labour market: transsexual people often denounce the difficulties due to their identity to find a job, as Emi told us:

*Most of the people think a transsexual is a streetwalker but the reality is different: we are doctors, singers, engineers, etc. and if nobody talks about transsexuality we will be always relegated to that prostitute stereotype. I want to maintain we are not streetwalkers and I want to help the women on the streets to find a better job. That's the reason why I left associations, because they didn't want to push this kind of project: I would like to help people, talking with institutions and enterprises... for example, IKEA now accept a transsexual labour force*

Four questions about discrimination have been asked (see Appendix), to make the questionnaire as light as possible on this sensitive subject. These four questions are:

- “Have you ever been a victim of discrimination events in your household, and by whom (my mother, my father, my sister, my brother, other relatives)?”
- “Have you ever been a victim of discrimination events outside of the household, and by whom (my mother, my father, my sister, my brother, other relatives)?”
- “Have you ever been suffered mobbing for sexual reasons, and by whom?”
- “Have you ever been bullied for sexual reasons at school/university, and by whom?”
- “Have you ever been discriminated in sport, and by whom?”

The first two questions consider the answer option “People started to avoid me after I came out”, specifically considered to operationalize the ghosting behaviour, emerged in the interviews, as an unconventional and underrated way of discrimination, both inside and outside the household.

In conclusion, it can be said that asking about violent acts of homophobia, such as beating or injuries, seems not to be enough for investigating discrimination. Less direct homonegativity behaviours, as ghosting or mobbing, have to be taken into account. Both of them are ways of avoidance: hanging out with LGBTQ people is avoided, working with LGBTQ people is avoided, pronouncing “gay” or “lesbian” words is avoided, saying “partner” is avoided, and so on. All this avoidance represents a sort of opposition, or at least impropriety, towards LGBTQ people (Graglia, 2012) and this is what could be resolved social policies.

## QUESTIONNAIRE DIMENSIONS STRUCTURE

Interviews pointed out some important subjects which would have been overlooked if interviews had not been carried out. Suggestions collected by interviewed people prompted the drafting of the questionnaire according to the following dimensions:

- Sociodemographic
- Work
- Education
- Sex, gender, sexual orientation
- Coming-out
- Social Network (SN)
- Dating apps (DAs)
- Socialization
- Discrimination

Every dimension has been operationalized through the questions, that you can find in Appendix. Most of the answers allow filling in an open modality, to give everyone the possibility of representing oneself, mainly asking about gender identity, sexual orientation and linked questions. In the final part of the questionnaire data handling authorization has been asked and, optionally, names of users to interview in turn, for introducing the snowballing method in the research project. Interviews suggested taking into consideration the importance of asking about the use of the internet, dating apps and social network as a new form of socialization, information and to perform its own gender and sexual orientation. Discrimination has been studied in-depth, asking about more disguised ways of mistreatment. Also, relationships with associations has been investigated accurately, to understand how these institutions have changed over the last few years, mainly with the diffusion of social media.

After the drafting, as described above, the data collection phase of the Over The Rainbow research project started: since April 2019 the questionnaire has been submitted to a list of 8343 Instagram users who tag their picture with the most common Italian LGBTQ community hashtags, such as #gayitaly, #gayitalia, #lesbianitaly, #loveisloveitaly, #lgbtitalia, #transitalia, #bisexitalia, etc. A username list has been generated through a web-scraping algorithm, developed using an R script. At this moment in time (October 2019) 552 responses have been recorded. Provisional data collected underline the accuracy of the questions and answer modalities: response rate is respectable and positive feedback about the questionnaire has been received, both by interviewees involved in a beta-test of the questionnaire and by users who respond to the survey.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this project methodology becomes as important as the research subject. That is the reason why so much attention has been focused on interviews before the survey.

Interviews allowed a part of the target population to contribute to the questionnaire drafting phase, giving to analysis the methodological added value of the personal and direct experience.

Letting interviews be semi-structured, proposing topic instead specific questions have contributed to pointing out characteristic aspects of current LGBTQ community.

If interviews had not been carried out, many aspects would have been neglected during the continuation of the research project, such as widespread dating apps, the use of social networks to socialize, to keep up with the news, to claim rights and to perform its own identity, LGBTQ associations transformation and their role towards civil society, new and old sexual discrimination.

The hope is that this research project and its survey, thanks to the methodological approach used, can lead to a deeper knowledge of phenomena and of social dynamics, and help to promote valid social policies for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1  
*QUESTIONNAIRE DIMENSIONS STRUCTURE AND QUESTIONS*

Introductory letter to ask people to participate in the survey, explaining why they have been selected and the aim of the research project.		
Dimension	Questions	Modalities
Sociodemographic	1) How old are you?	(years old)
	2) In which region were you born?	20 Italian regions (NUTS 2)
	3) What is the population of your hometown size?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ≤5000</li> <li>• 5'001-20'000</li> <li>• 20'000-50'000</li> <li>• 50'000-250'000</li> <li>• &gt;250'000 inhabitants</li> </ul>
	4) In which region do you live?	20 Italian regions (NUTS 2)
	5) What is the population of your city of residence?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ≤5000</li> <li>• 5'001-20'000</li> <li>• 20'000-50'000</li> <li>• 50'000-250'000</li> <li>• &gt;250'000 inhabitants</li> </ul>
	6) What is your educational level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary education or none</li> <li>• Junior school license</li> <li>• Professional qualification (3 years high school)</li> <li>• High school diploma (5 years)</li> <li>• Bachelor's degree</li> <li>• Master's degree</li> <li>• Post-graduate master</li> <li>• PhD</li> </ul>
	7) Are you at the present in a relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No, single</li> <li>• Yes, with a same-gender person</li> <li>• Yes, with another-gender person</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	8) What is your marital status?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unmarried</li> <li>• In a civil union</li> <li>• Married</li> <li>• Divorced</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	9) Who do you live with?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On my own,</li> <li>• With my sons/daughters</li> <li>• With my partner</li> <li>• With my partner and (my/his/her/our) sons/daughters</li> <li>• With friends/flatmates</li> <li>• With my parents</li> <li>• With other relatives (uncles/aunts, grandparents, etc.)</li> </ul>
	10) What do you do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I Work (to question 11)</li> <li>• I am looking for a job</li> <li>• I study (to question 13)</li> <li>• I am retired</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
Work	11) What's your job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Businessmen, manager</li> <li>• High specialization job (researcher, engineer, etc.)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical job</li> <li>• Executive office job (secretary, accountant, etc.)</li> <li>• Commercial job (seller, shop assistant, etc.)</li> <li>• Artisan, specialized worker, farmer</li> <li>• Driver, factory worker</li> <li>• Non-qualified job</li> <li>• Armed force</li> </ul>
	12) What is your net monthly wage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0 – 500 €</li> <li>• 501 - 1000 €</li> <li>• 1000 - 1500 €</li> <li>• 1500 - 2000 €</li> <li>• 2000 - 3000 €</li> <li>• &gt; 3000 €</li> </ul>
Education	13) What are you studying for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junior school license</li> <li>• High school diploma (to question 14)</li> <li>• Bachelor's degree (to question 15)</li> <li>• Master's degree (to question 15)</li> <li>• Post-graduate master (to question 15)</li> <li>• PhD (to question 15)</li> </ul>
	14) Which kind of diploma are you studying for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional institute</li> <li>• Technical institute</li> <li>• Teaching institute</li> <li>• Scientific high school</li> <li>• Classical high school</li> <li>• Artistic high school</li> </ul>
	15) Which academic area are you studying for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural sciences</li> <li>• Architecture</li> <li>• Chemical-Pharmaceutical</li> <li>• Defence and security</li> <li>• Economic-statistical</li> <li>• Sport sciences</li> <li>• Geo-biological</li> <li>• Law</li> <li>• Engineering</li> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Literature</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Medicine</li> <li>• Social and political sciences</li> <li>• Psychological</li> <li>• Scientific</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
Sex, gender, sexual orientation	16) Birth sex?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Intersex</li> </ul>
	17) How would you define your gender identity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> <li>• Transgender</li> <li>• Queer, gender-fluid, non-binary</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	18) How would you define your sexual orientation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asexual</li> <li>• Bisexual</li> <li>• Heterosexual</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homosexual</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	<p>19) Agreement with sentences about gender identity, sex and sexual orientation: 5-levels Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking about <u>gender identity</u>, and not of sex, comforts me, because being classified as male or female is not enough</li> <li>• Proliferation of gender identities is getting ridiculous and it increases the distance between LGBTQ and heterosexual communities</li> <li>• My gender identity cannot be labelled. I perform it daily</li> <li>• “Queer” suits my identity</li> <li>• The proliferation of <u>sexual orientations</u> is getting ridiculous and it increases the distance between LGBTQ and heterosexual communities</li> <li>• The multitude of gender identities and sexual orientations highlights the LGBTQ community’s thousand facets</li> <li>• The multitude of gender identities and sexual orientations makes the LGBTQ civil rights claims stronger</li> <li>• Some sexual orientations are more discriminated than others</li> </ul>
Coming-out	<p>20) Who was the first person you came-out to?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None, I have never come-out (to question 22)</li> <li>• My mother</li> <li>• My father</li> <li>• My sister</li> <li>• My brother</li> <li>• My partner</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Colleagues</li> <li>• Superiors at work (teachers at school)</li> <li>• Team-mates, sport-mates</li> <li>• Relatives (uncles/aunts, grandparents, etc.)</li> </ul>
	<p>21) Who knows your sexual orientation today?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My mother</li> <li>• My father</li> <li>• My sister</li> <li>• My brother</li> <li>• My partner</li> <li>• Friends</li> <li>• Colleagues</li> <li>• Superiors at work (teachers at school)</li> <li>• Team-mates, sport-mates</li> <li>• Relatives (uncles/aunts, grandparents, etc.)</li> </ul>
Social Network (SN)	<p>22) How often do you use these SNs? (SNs: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Others)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don’t have any account for this SN</li> <li>• I’ve got an account but I don’t use it anymore</li> <li>• Once a week</li> <li>• Once a month</li> <li>• Once a day</li> <li>• More than once a day</li> </ul>
	<p>23) Which device do you use for browsing SNs?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PC</li> <li>• Tablet</li> <li>• Smartphone</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	<p>24) Which SN do you use for these purposes? (SNs: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Others)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To post selfies</li> <li>• To post my photo/videos, made by other ones</li> <li>• To post group photos of me and friends/colleagues of mine</li> <li>• To post photo/videos of me and my partner</li> <li>• To post photo/videos of activities that I carry out and which characterize me (sport, music that I listen to, books that I read, pics of my dog/cat)</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To post contents that I'd like my friends to repost (pics taken from the web, events, meme, magazine/newspaper articles)</li> <li>• To post 24h-lasting stories</li> <li>• To keep me informed, reading posts</li> <li>• To comment on posts that I agree with (also just liking them)</li> <li>• To comment posts that I don't like, giving my reasons to a comment</li> <li>• Using hashtag to index my post and make it traceable by other users</li> <li>• To follow VIPs and celebrities</li> <li>• To chat with people that I know in real life</li> <li>• To chat with people that I do not know in real life</li> </ul>
	<p>25) Agreement with sentences about social media: 5-levels Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNs are useful to meet new people</li> <li>• SNs are useful to show ourselves</li> <li>• SNs are useful to feel less alone</li> <li>• SNs are dangerous, because we only communicate through a keyboard</li> <li>• SNs make relations distant and superficial</li> <li>• SNs, carefully used, represent a good tool to be informed</li> <li>• SNs take too much time</li> <li>• SNs allow me to share my opinions</li> <li>• I use SNs to find out all the details of a person I have just met, looking at what he/she posts</li> <li>• SNs are a double-edged sword: they give freedom of expression to many people, but can be used unhelpfully</li> </ul>
	<p>26) Have you ever used this SN for these purposes? (SN: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Others)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To meet people with whom you later hanged out with</li> <li>• To meet people, without hanging out with them</li> <li>• To participate in an LGBTQ friendly event, of which you heard on SNs (Facebook events, Instagram event page, etc.)</li> <li>• To keep informed, reading articles, listening to podcasts or watching videos about LGBTQ claims</li> <li>• To keep informed, reading articles, listening to podcast or watching videos about coming-out</li> <li>• To express solidarity in cases of homophobia events (e.g Orlando massacre)</li> <li>• To express your satisfaction for the recognition of LGBTQ civil rights (e.g Civil Unions for same-sex couples)</li> <li>• To express your annoyance for the lack of LGBTQ civil rights (e.g Civil Unions for same-sex couples)</li> </ul>
	<p>27) Is your sexual orientation deducible by your SNs profiles?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, it is.</li> <li>• There are pictures with my partner/s but I have never come-out on SNs.</li> <li>• No, it is not.</li> </ul>
Dating apps (DAs)	<p>28) Have you ever used DAs, such as Grindr, Tinder, Her, Wapa,Happn, etc.?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I have. I still use DAs. (to 30)</li> <li>• Yes, I have used them, but I don't use DAs anymore. (to 29)</li> <li>• No, I have never used DAs. (to 32)</li> </ul>
	<p>29) Why did you stop using Das?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because I got engaged with a person met through a DA</li> <li>• Because chatting and swiping people pictures, takes too much time</li> <li>• Because I did not meet very interesting people</li> <li>• Because people I met, in the real-life, were not as interesting as on DAs</li> <li>• Because I prefer to meet people in a more "traditional" way</li> <li>• Because DAs are just another way of avoiding out sexual orientation and I met too many people engaged in a heterosexual relationship</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>

	30) Have you ever hang out with someone known on a DA?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I have, more than once</li> <li>• yes, I have, just once</li> <li>• No, I have never hanged out with someone met on a DA</li> </ul>
	31) Do/did you have a public profile on the Das you used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I used my profile picture</li> <li>• No, I used a fake/anonymous profile</li> </ul>
Socialization	32) Do you frequent these kinds of places to meet people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBTQ places, or gay bars</li> <li>• LGBTQ discos</li> <li>• LGBTQ associations</li> <li>• No, I don't</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	33) Do you feel part of the LGBTQ community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I do.</li> <li>• Yes, I do, but partially.</li> <li>• No, I do not, but I support it.</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	34) Agreement with LGBTQ community claims: 5-levels Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil unions between same-sex couples</li> <li>• Marriage between same-sex couples</li> <li>• Child adoption for same-sex couples</li> <li>• Homophobia crime introduction in the Italian legislation</li> <li>• Greater expressive freedom</li> </ul>
	35) Have you ever endorsed an LGBTQ claim on SNSs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I did</li> <li>• No, I did not</li> <li>• I do not remember</li> </ul>
	36) Have you ever been on a Pride?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I have</li> <li>• No, I have not</li> <li>• No, but I wish I had</li> </ul>
	37) Agreement with sentences about internet and LGBTQ associations : 5-levels Likert scale (strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree, strongly agree)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing a post on SN allows me to easily reach many people</li> <li>• Instagram can be used to meet people who have my interests and hobbies</li> <li>• SNS are substituting LGBTQ associations as places for sharing sexual orientation and gender identity experiences</li> <li>• Associations are important for LGBTQ rights claims and to support those who need help, but to socialize nowadays there are more efficient tools available</li> </ul>
Discrimination	38) Have you ever been a victim of discriminatory events into your household, and by whom? (My mother, my father, my sister, my brother, other relatives)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have been mocked</li> <li>• I have been insulted, e.g. swear words and/or aggressively treated</li> <li>• I have been shoved</li> <li>• I have been hit or beaten up</li> <li>• I was told to hide my sexual orientation</li> <li>• I was accused of causing a great sorrow, hurting my parents</li> <li>• People started to avoid me after I came out</li> <li>• I have been insulted or mocked, with homophobic comments on SNSs</li> <li>• I was accused of spreading sexual-transmitted diseases (e.g AIDS)</li> </ul>
	39) Have you ever been a victim of discriminatory events out of your household, and by whom? (My partner, my friends, my colleagues/classmates,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have been mocked</li> <li>• I have been insulted, e.g. swear words and/or aggressively treated</li> <li>• I have been shoved</li> <li>• I have been hit or beaten up</li> <li>• I was told to hide my sexual orientation</li> <li>• I was accused of causing a great sorrow, hurting my parents</li> <li>• People started to avoid me after I came out</li> <li>• I have been insulted or mocked, with homophobic comments on SNSs</li> </ul>

	my superiors/teachers, my sport mates, unknown people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I was accused of spreading sexual-transmitted diseases (e.g AIDS)</li> </ul>
	40) Have you ever been mobbed for sexual reasons, and by whom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I have, by colleagues</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by superiors</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by other people</li> <li>• No, I have never been mobbed</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	41) Have you ever been bullied for sexual reasons at school/university, and by whom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I have, by classmates</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by other students</li> <li>• No, I have never been bullied</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	42) Have you ever been discriminated in sport, and by whom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I have, by teammates</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by opposing team members</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by the coach</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by other sport club members</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by supporters</li> <li>• No, I have never been discriminated in sport</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
	43) Have you ever been teased on a SN?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I have, by people whom I know in real life</li> <li>• Yes, I have, by people whom I do not know in real life</li> <li>• No, I have never been teased on SNs</li> <li>• Other: _____</li> </ul>
Snowballing	Username to interview in turn	(3 possible usernames)
Privacy	Authorization to handle data, according to the law 196/2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes, I authorize the use of my data</li> <li>• No, I do not authorize the use of my data</li> </ul>

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