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**The Grey Areas in Trafficking of Nigerian Women: from Trafficked Woman to
Perpetrator of Trafficking**

Tesi di Dottorato di : Eva Lo Iacono
Matricola: 3911181

Anno Accademico 2012/2013



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Perpetrator of Trafficking**

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ABSTRACT

There are not clear figures regarding the group of Nigerian women who are lured annually in the sex market in Italy. Facing such a dark number, several questions on the lives of these unknown women arise: What happens to the trafficking victims who do not find any form of social aid or assistance? What happens when the former trafficked women are not able to exit from the trade industry?

According to eyewitness accounts as well as official sources, some current madams were trafficked women in the past. They made a career in the trafficking hierarchy and its organised crime groups. The female mobility towards the organisational side of the trafficking offence represents the most striking characteristic of Nigerian trade industry; that is, the victims are included by their persecutors as active part of a more complex criminal project.

Such a distinctive element of Nigerian criminal model needs to be analysed through new approaches aimed at highlighting: a) the *grey areas* in the trade industry; b) the *intermediate roles* that the individuals hold within the victim/offender model; c) the female *vertical mobility* in the trafficking hierarchy.

Through an ethnographic methodological framework, this study wants to analyse the multiple female roles in the trafficking industry.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Observatory on Migration
CATW	Coalition against Trafficking in Women
CDA	Centro d'Accoglienza
CIE	Centro d'Identificazione e d'Espulsione
DNA	Direzione Nazionale Antimafia
DDA	Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia
EU	European Union
EUROPOL	European Union's law enforcement agency
EUROSTAT	European Statistics
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISMU	Iniziative e Studi sulla Multietnicità
NAPTIP	Nigerian Governmental Agency for Prohibition Traffic in Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
TIP	Trafficking in Persons Report
UN	United Nations
UNAR	Ufficio Nazionale Anti-discriminazioni Razziali
UNCTOC	United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research
US	United States

PART I

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Question: Grey Areas in Nigerian Trafficking for Commercial Sex Work

“A Nigerian woman, like me, brought me to Italy. She made me work in the street from 2008 to 2011. Then, I attended a social programme. Before starting the programme, I lived in Genova where I was exploited. Here, I met a Nigerian woman who worked in a restaurant. I knew this woman just because she was Nigerian and spoke my same language. She told me that life in the street was not good for me. She suggested me to change my life. She explained me how I could do that” (interview no. 12¹).

These are the words of a Nigerian woman who broke out of the trafficking business by entering a social assistance programme (provided by a non-profit association). Now, there are not clear estimates regarding the number of Nigerian women who annually are lured in the sex industry in Italy (UNICRI 2010; U.S. Department of State 2013). Given such a dark number (Savona and Stefanizzi 2007), it is right to wonder what happens to those women who are not able to exit from the sex market, or who do not find any form of social assistance, or even who do not want to leave the trafficking industry.

To find a response to these issues, the lives of Nigerian women who currently hold the role of entrepreneurs in the trafficking business must be examined; according both to eyewitness accounts and official sources (Aghatise 2004; Carchedi et al. 2007; Okojies 2009; Siegel and De Blank 2010), a number of the current business-women was past trafficked girls who made a career in the criminal organisation’s hierarchy. Considering a criminal business model established on recruiting former victims into leadership roles, the following main question arises:

How do the former trafficked women move from the lowest position of the trafficking hierarchy to gain the role of entrepreneur of the business?

¹ See Table 2.3, Chapter II, *paragraph 2.3.2.*

The analysis of this distinctive issue helps us to understand the way how Nigerian young women are lead, or even obliged, to come to terms with the THB business. Through this analysis, the middle positions that women hold when moving towards the organisational side of the trafficking offence come to light.

A number of official data identify Italy as one of the main destination countries of irregular migration flows from Nigeria (UNICRI 2010; DNA 2012; IOM 2013). In accordance with this data, the Annual State Anti-mafia Division Report states that Nigerian residents within Italian borders grew twice than other African citizens during the last year (DNA 2012). This trend has also been confirmed by the United Nation Inter-regional Crime and Justice Research (UNICRI), which reveals a significant increase of Nigerian individuals over the last decade: from 5,000 – 6,500 units in 2000 to 8,000-10,000 units in 2008 and 2009. The peculiar element of this migration is its gender composition (Prina 2003; IOM 2012): unlike the majority of African migration flows (where male usually represents the largest portion), Nigerian migration is mostly female. Similarly, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that in 2011 the majority of foreigners received in the Centre of first aid in Lampedusa (Sicily) was made up of women coming from Nigeria (IOM 2013)².

The growing number of Nigerian women in Italy is connected with the local street prostitution whereby Nigerians are one of the most represented nationalities because of a well structured trafficking business: Nigerian criminality, indeed, has been indicated by the National Antimafia Office as a pervasive criminality in Italy (as well throughout Europe), principally dedicated to the drug trade as well as the trade in women for sexual exploitation and falsification of documents (Prina, 2003; UNODC, 2004).

The Nigerian trafficking in humans is characterized by three core elements: 1) it is usually performed by high structured and well-networked Nigerian criminal cells; 2) it is a female-oriented business; 3) it is based on a process which leads the former trafficked women to become themselves the entrepreneurs of the illegal business.

In order to clarify these points, it is worth mentioning the main feature of Nigerian migration towards Italy. A relevant migration flow from Nigeria to Italy started in the

1980s', as one of the effects of the Nigerian economic and political crises; the Nigerian migrants started to work as day labourers in tomato farming in the Italian countryside. In this context, according to certain scholars (Carchedi et al. 2007), the prostitution of Nigerian women developed informally to compensate for the low salaries of seasonal employment and primarily involved an African clientele. The prostitution of black women then increased significantly in response to the local demand of Italian clients for sex with foreign women. These Italian customers regarded black females as a novel form of sexual entertainment (Nicola et al. 2009). When the traffickers realized that sizeable profits could be earned by sending "exotic" women to the European sex market, Nigerian women were encouraged by their own husbands to leave their country to work in the lucrative prostitution business (Aghatise 2004; Becucci and Massari 2008).

As a consequence of the high profits, Nigerian individuals started to invest in the THB and developed networks of organised crime groups from their native country to the trafficking destination ones. In this context, the presence of female entrepreneurs, who managed the girls brought to EU countries, was essential for the success of the Nigerian THB industry. According to several official data and empirical research studies (Aghatise 2004; Okojies, 2009; Prina, 2003; Siegel and De Blank 2010), the trafficking business was taken over by Nigerian women who was lured into trafficking during the 1980s-1990s. After having paid off the debts to their traffickers, those women brought other girls to Italy aimed at exploiting these latter in the local sex market. These businesswomen, known as *madam* or *mamans*, achieved an important social status in their original communities, and their success economic adventures contributed to persuade new girls to consider trafficking as a feasible career chance (Beneduce, 2006; interview no.25).

By analysing madams' life stories, indeed, appears that some women move from the lowest hierarchical position of the trafficking business (the trafficked woman) to the highest one (the madam)³. That is, Nigerian trafficking is fuelled by its former victims

² According to the IOM report, around 1,300 Nigerian women were hosted in the Italian Centre for Identification of illegal Migrants (CIE) in 2011. They represent the largest nationality group among migrants located in this Centre.

³ Even though madams usually play a leadership role in the trafficking business, it can happen that some of them are used as a tool to perform criminal activities by other individuals (for more information see Chapter V).

who, at a certain stage, resign themselves to the illegal trade and consent to partake in the business (Ordinary Court of Naples, Court of Assizes, 2010).

Such a *modus operandi* has the main effect to strengthen a *grey area* within the victim/offender dichotomy which determines in turn two main outcomes: a) the individuals lured into trafficking hold *intermediate positions* between the pair of opposing figures victim/persecutor; b) it is quite difficult to understand when the characters act as independent agents or are compelled by social obligations or other individuals.

1.1.1 Aims and Objectives of the study

Based on the above mentioned research question, this paper aims at investigating the hypothesis of the grey area within the victim/perpetrator dichotomy in Nigerian trafficking phenomenon. The main research question enounced in the first paragraph - *How do the former trafficked women move from the lowest position of the trafficking hierarchy to gain the role of entrepreneur of the business?* - consists of a vast set of related questions that can be divided in three groups:

1. Who is the trafficking victim? Who is the persecutor? What kind of relationships are there between trafficked women and traffickers? Which form of force or coercion is used against Nigerian trafficked women? What is Nigerians' attitude on the trafficking in women?
2. What are women roles in trafficking? How women partake in the business? Why women enter in the business? When does the former trafficked woman become free to decide for herself, without any conditioning? Do trafficked women break from trafficking? When does the exploitative phase terminate? Who is the madam's favorite? Are there independent Nigerian prostitutes? What are their tasks and roles within these organizations?
3. Who is the madam? Who are the madams currently working in Italy? Have they been trafficked in their past? How do they live in their condition of madam? Have they been obliged to enter in the business?

In order to answers to those issues, the study pursues the following main goals:

- a) to challenge the current dominant victim/perpetrator model;
- b) to identify the reasons why women are encouraged to climb the trafficking hierarchical structure;
- c) to identify the crucial stages, or steps, through which trafficked women move from one role to another one, changing their *status* within trafficking business;
- d) to provide empirical cases of individuals who experienced trafficking.

1.1.2 Organisation of the thesis

This contribution is divided in two main parts. In the first section, the research problem and some terms used by the author relating to the topic - i.e., the grey area, middle positions and intermediate roles - are explained. In the first chapter definitions of THB as stipulated by international acts and the literature are provided and some main approaches on the issue are reviewed. In addition, sociological theories aimed at facilitating the comprehension of the phenomenon related to women trafficking are debated; theories on social capital and on female offenders are developed, following a critical analysis of the current debate on prostitution of female migrants. The second chapter describes the methodological steps and the strategy employed to carry out the research. The third chapter provides the reader with the cultural context and law enforcement on trafficking of the two countries that are the object of this study.

The second part of this thesis shows the empirical research findings.

Based on interviews and an observation in a Nigerian Community, the fourth chapter describes Nigerian criminal model as reported by author s' informants. Attempting to answer the main research question, the fifth chapter analyses step by step the way how the former trafficked women become madams over time. Finally, the conclusions suggest the way how the main research question should be analysed by further ethnographic studies. Three final annexes gives the reader the chance to see the phenomenon first-hand.

1.2 Explanation of Terms: Grey Area and Vertical Mobility in Human Trafficking

In order to capture the various roles in the trafficking system, the author draws on the term "gray area" as it was originally coined by Primo Levi (1986) to explain a phenomenon related to life in the Nazi concentration camps.

The concept is more widely known as a typical expression of the recent Italian literature on the Mafia and organized crime. In this connection, the expression has been applied in a number of different contexts (both in the economic and political fields) and with different connotations; this caused a certain degree of confusion regarding its meaning.

In the Mafia context, "gray area" refers to an undefined and symbolic space in which businesses and individuals involved in organized crime are hidden by a false legality (Arlacchi 1992 and Santino 2010). In this regard, the sociologist Santino designated as Mafia middle-class that group of managers, entrepreneurs and politicians who secretly adopt the Mafia's *modus operandi*. That is, they are not members of organized criminal groups but cooperate with such groups in different ways and on different levels. Certain scholars have enlarged the gray area to include any citizen who demonstrates acquiescence toward the Mafia and its culture (Dalla Chiesa 1993).

The expression gray area, as used here, was originally coined in a different social context. At the end of the 1980s, the Jewish writer Primo Levi employed this term to describe a specific set of circumstances that he observed in the Auschwitz concentration camp, where he was imprisoned during the Second World War. Levi used the words "gray zone" to refer to a group of prisoners who helped the Nazi guards operate the concentration camp. In return for their assistance, the prisoner-officers (as Levi named them) achieved a higher social status than the other prisoners (e.g., the *kapos* of camp's work groups). Thus, their behavior came to resemble that of the Nazi guards, and they used violence against the other Jews and even killed them. In this way, the prisoner-officers became persecutors, even though they themselves were imprisoned in the camp. Finally, in his analysis, Levi observed how a large majority of camp prisoners sought to become prisoner-officers to escape hunger and obtain an advantageous position.

To analyze the social interactions between the actors who inhabited the Nazi camp, Levi avoids any *Manichean*⁴ thinking or binary approach. In fact, from his perspective, the

⁴ The *Manichaeism* is a dualistic philosophy dividing the world between good and evil principles. The adjective *manichean* is widely applied to describe a moral dualism, where good and evil are defined.

area between the victim and the persecutor is not empty. This area is populated by different individuals who hold middle positions between the two opposing figures of victim and offender. Levi (1986) concludes his analysis by noting the complexity of the relationships within the camp's social system: "we are dealing with a paradoxical analogy between victim and oppressor, and we are anxious to be clear: both are in the same trap [he refers to the camp], but it is the oppressor, and he alone, who has prepared it and activated it" (14).

This analysis of the complexity of the relationships between the victim and the persecutor can be used to better understand the Nigerian trafficking phenomenon; the women lured into trafficking are enslaved and victimized through a well-organized criminal system. The vulnerable and poor living conditions of the women in their native country cause them to seek a better living standard elsewhere and to migrate using the only path they know: international trafficking. Once lured into this trade, Nigerian women are exposed to a pervasive psychological conditioning through which the traffickers persuade them to accept their predicament. That is, the erstwhile victims are driven to become partners in crime and independent agents over time. Similar to the Nazi camp prisoners, the victim aspires to achieve a higher position in the trafficking hierarchy by moving toward the organizational side of the trade.

An explanation of why the relationships between the individuals involved in trafficking are so dynamic is provided by the *vertical mobility* theory, as Siegel names it, which refers "to [the] changing position of women within the organizational side of the sex sector" (Siegel 2011)". This theory has been confirmed by several empirical research studies and police investigations (Aghatise 2004; Carchedi et al. 2007; Okojies 2009; Siegel and De Blank 2010) that have found that certain formerly trafficked women become facilitators or entrepreneurs in the form of madams by moving within a trafficking hierarchy.

"In some cases, victims are used to control other victims, which indicate a complex distribution of roles within these criminal networks (...). Women play a particularly important role within these groups (Nigerian criminal groups), closely monitoring the trafficking process from recruitment to exploitation. Nigerian victims often do not perceive themselves as such, but rather as immigrants who must repay a debt to their facilitators. In this context, victims often become members of the criminal groups exploiting them, ultimately assuming the role of 'madam' in the exploitation of others.

In turn, this cultural novelty reduces the likelihood that victims will cooperate with law enforcement” (Europol 2011: 11-12).

Such *vertical mobility* by the women upon trafficking’s career ladder explains why certain of these women hold intermediate roles between the two opposing figures of victim and persecutor: e.g., the madam's favorite (see Chapter 2, *paragraph 2.1.1*). Therefore, the gray zone is populated by those individuals who play an intermediate role in trafficking. These individuals were originally lured into the trafficking phenomenon and now contribute to the operation of the business on different levels and in different ways, although they are still forced to work under slavery-like conditions by the traffickers.

1.2.1 Definitions of Human Trafficking

The States reached an agreement on the definition of trafficking in persons on a broad international level for the first time by the United Nations *Trafficking Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons*⁵, enclosed in the Convention on Transnational Organised Crime (2000)⁶. As it is stipulated in article 3 of the UN Protocol, the trafficking in persons means:

“(a) the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age”⁷

⁵ The UN TIP Protocol (included in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime) is the first agreement on a broad international level concerning the definition of the trafficking in persons.

⁶ Rijken, 2003, p. 66.

⁷ The State, where the offence occurred, must protect women who have been trafficked as victims of a crime and a human right abuse as well. This international duty of the State in front of victims of

In this definition, three main core elements play a role in human trafficking offence: 1) the act of *recruitment*, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons; 2) the use of *force* or other forms of coercion (or any other means of threat or deception during the recruiting and transportation phases)⁸; 3) the final purpose of *exploitation* of the victims.

The status of victim of trafficking is defined in the article, which includes among victims:

- Individuals who have been coerced or forced by traffickers (i.e. abduction);
- Individuals who have been deceived by traffickers (i.e. fraud);
- Individuals in a position of vulnerability which was abused by traffickers.

The Protocol seems to emphasise a classification of victim based on the extent to which the individual is forced, deceived and exploited at a certain stage of the trafficking, while it considers the trafficked person consent as irrelevant when it results in slavery-like living conditions and the deprivation of fundamental freedoms and rights (Obokata, 2006b). Such a definition implies that trafficked women who consented to prostitute themselves but did not know about the harsh and unfair working conditions beforehand should be regarded as victims (Di Tommaso et al. 2008).

In this regard, article 3 broadens the number of those who can be considered victims, by interpreting the abuse of the vulnerability of individuals to be a tool used by traffickers during the recruiting phase (see *paragraph 1.2.1*).

The persons recognised as victims of trafficking offence must be legally protected by the national laws: such a duty is clearly stated in article 9, paragraph (b) UN Protocol, which stipulates that “States Parties shall establish comprehensive policies, programmes and other measures (...) to protect victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, from re –victimization”. Through this tool, the victim of trafficking has achieved a protection *status* usually not guaranteed for those foreigners who enter, or stay, illegally within nation borders.

trafficking does not lapse even when trafficked women have crossed the borders, and stayed, illegally in the destination country (Obokata, 2006a).

⁸ Under the viewpoint of several scholars, the coercive means listed in the article must not be considered exhaustive and it should be understood in a more broad sense.

At the European level, a number of acts and conventions on fighting trafficking in human beings (enacted both by European Union and by the Council of Europe) was drafted in accordance to the content of the UN Protocol. Even though some slight differences can be set out, the Council Framework Decision on Combating Trafficking (enacted by the European Commission, 2002) mostly replicates the UN definition:

“Each Member State shall take the necessary measures to ensure that the following acts are punishable:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, subsequent reception of a person, including exchange or transfer of control over that person, where:

(a) use is made of coercion, force or threat, including abduction, or

(b) use is made of deceit or fraud, or

(c) there is an abuse of authority or of a position of vulnerability, which is such that the person has no real and acceptable alternative but to submit to the abuse involved, or

(d) payments or benefits are given or received to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation of that person’s labour or services, including at least forced or compulsory labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery or servitude, or for the purpose of the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, including in pornography”.

The Framework Decision regards trafficking in human beings as a criminal offence both with an international and a national nature⁹: applying this perspective, the European Union attempts to include in its provision trafficking which occurs within a single member state and trafficking that involves several EU states (Rijken, 2003). Moreover, in this act, the trafficking in persons is not necessary regarded as an offence committed by organised crime groups: thus the trade in human beings held by individuals is included.

In compliance with the European Union policies on combating trafficking (and in accordance with an internal provision of the EU Plan on Best Practices, Standards and Procedures for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Human Beings), all EU states have been obliged to sign, and ratify, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, (promoted by the Council of Europe, Warsaw, 2005). This act integrally

⁹ Reading the Framework Decision, the unique nature of the European Union has to be taken into account: by policies of harmonisation of national legislations and the enhancement of collaboration between member states in some relevant matters, such as the criminal one, the EU attempts to achieve a common area of freedom, security and justice.

Other relevant European Union laws on trafficking in persons are: Directive 2011/36 on preventing and combating human trafficking and protecting victims; Directive 2004/81 on residence permit for victims of

replicates the trafficking definition coined by the UN Trafficking Protocol and attempts to include into scope of its provisions all possible forms of trafficking in humans: indeed, in the preamble, the Convention claims that it should be referred to all forms of trafficking in human beings, whether national or trans-national, connected, or not, with the organised crime.

Although the UN Protocol has achieved widespread and clear international consensus, there is no uniform interpretation of trafficking in human beings: indeed, according to other international conventions and organizations¹⁰, the Protocol demonstrates a serious shortcoming (Shelley, 2010) failing to distinguish between the two major problems related to the trafficking phenomenon: the recruitment and transfer of persons, on the one hand, and their exploitation, on the other (Rijken, 2003). In spite of these criticisms, the Protocol remains the main international agreement on this matter and many regional conventions and national laws (i.e. the Italian law) have been founded on its content. Therefore, the Protocol has to be taken into account in order to comprehend the typical elements occurring in the offence of trafficking in humans.

1.2.2 A Focus on the Condition of Vulnerability

As mentioned above, the UN Trafficking Protocol highly focuses on the condition of “vulnerability” of trafficked people (referred to article 3 UN Trafficking Protocol): such an element, indeed, helps to classify the victims of trafficking offence. In the UN Trafficking Protocol the abuse of a position of vulnerability is included among the means used by traffickers to recruit their victims in this trade: indeed, beyond the physical force and the psychological subjugation, article 3 lists the abuse of a position of vulnerability as a form of coercion by which trafficking is perpetrated. This can encompass a very broad range of situations since poverty, hunger, illness, lack of education, and displacement could all be considered as positions of vulnerability. According to the United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime, all human rights violations which contribute to creating economic deprivation and social conditions limiting individual choices can be regarded as “positions of vulnerability” (UNODC, 2012).

trafficking in human beings.

¹⁰ For instance, the Convention for the Elimination of all form of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW).

In order to better understand the different facets of this concept, a definition of vulnerability, was provided in the act on “Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People” (signed in Brasilia and dated 2008), where vulnerable people are defined:

“As those who, due to reasons of age, gender, physical or mental state, or due to social, economic, ethnic and/or cultural circumstances, find it especially difficult to fully exercise their rights before the justice system as recognised to them by law. The following may constitute causes of vulnerability: age, disability, belonging to indigenous communities or minorities, victimisation, migration and internal displacement, poverty, gender and deprivation of liberty. The specific definition of vulnerable people in each country will depend on their specific characteristics and even on their level of social or economic development” (Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People, 2008).

Relating to the trafficking issue, it is important to underline that vulnerability can refer to a condition experienced by individuals both in their countries of origin and in those of destination. For example, the irregularity of an individual’s legal status in the country of destination is widely acknowledged to be an important factor in enhancing people vulnerability to being trafficked; in fact, irregular status is particularly amenable to becoming a means by which an individual is placed or maintained in a situation of exploitation (UNODC, 2012). The usage of the term “vulnerability” in the Protocol, therefore, intends to widen the number of people lured into trafficking who can be regarded as victims.

1.3 Literature Review: Approaches to the Issue

What qualitative and quantitative data are available?

The EU and its member States have approached trafficking in human beings both as one of the priority areas in the fight against organised crime and as a human rights concern¹¹. The European programmes and policies in combating trafficking and all the literature related to this issue have provided us with quite extensive, comparable and reliable data on the phenomenon within the EU zone. In this regards, the Eurostat report

¹¹ The Council and the European Parliament of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims; Action Oriented Paper on strengthening the external dimensions in actions against trafficking in human beings; EU Strategy towards the Eradication

on *Trafficking in Human Beings 2012* shows some interesting findings: (a) an increasing relevance of trafficking phenomenon within the EU member states (table 1.1); (b) the significant weight of sexual exploitation within trafficking practices (table 1.2); (c) the relevance of Nigeria as the main country of origin of non-EU citizenship victims (table 1.3).

	2008	2009	2010	Percentage change 2008-2010
Numbers of victims	6 309	6 955	7 418	+18 %

Table 1.1 – Eurostat, 2013

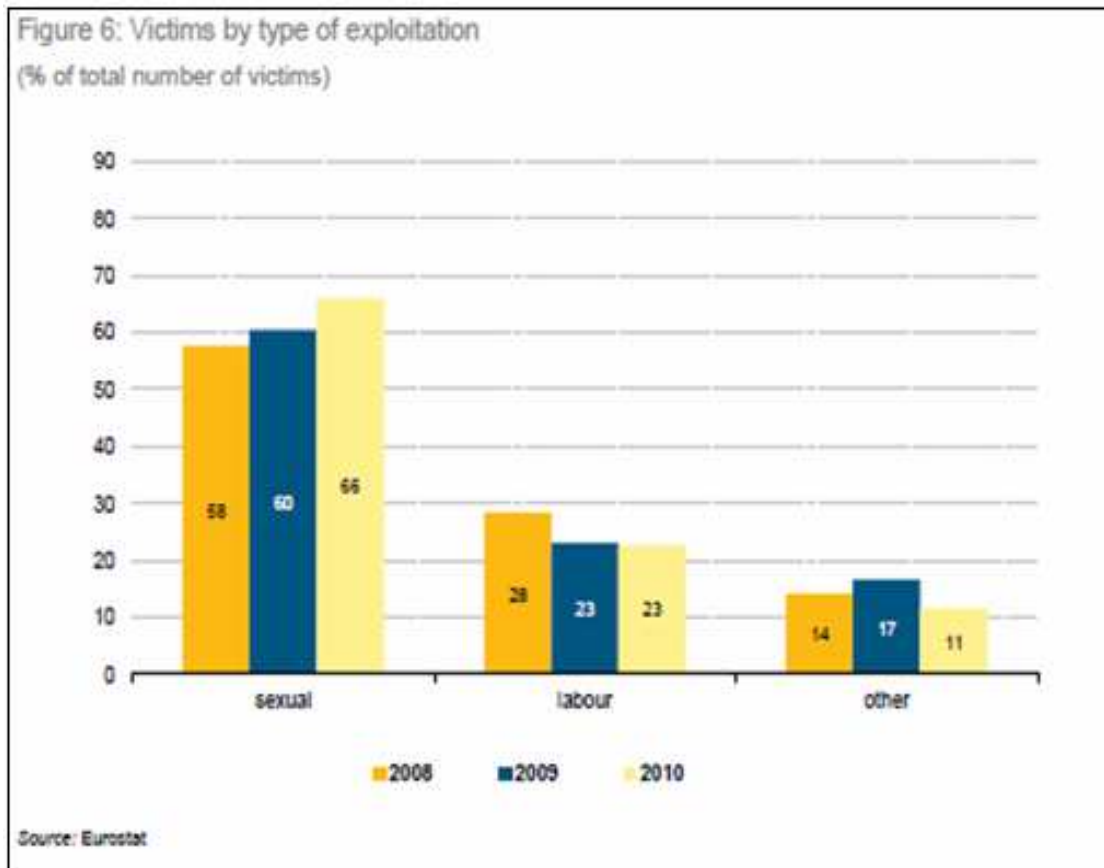


Table 1.2 – Eurostat, 2013

Top 10 countries of victims with non-EU citizenships					
2008		2009		2010	
Nigeria	878	Nigeria	326	Nigeria	338
China	268	Brazil	151	China	248
Morocco	122	China	150	Paraguay	142
Brazil	111	Russia	66	Dominican Republic	142
Moldova	80	Algeria	60	Colombia	91
Albania	71	Vietnam	50	Russia	91
Russia	67	Thailand	49	Brazil	76
Algeria	62	Sierra Leone	47	Vietnam	64
Ukraine	57	Guinea	35	Namibia	52
Sierra Leone	44	Colombia	32	Algeria	50
Total	1 760		966		1 294
Total non EU	2 443		1 695		2 468
%	72		57		52

Source: Eurostat

Table 1.3 – Eurostat 2013

Relevant data on human trafficking trends and regional patterns in EU member states can be found in other primary sources produced by international and UN agencies. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) maintains a data-base on the trafficked persons whose repatriation it assists (with annual summaries). While the United Nations Office in Drugs and Organised Crime Human Trafficking¹² (UNODC) publishes a human trafficking case law database for every country in the world affected by this crime. With regards to trafficking in women from Nigeria towards European countries, in the UNODC database is possible to find at least ten relevant judgements where the occurrence of the crime is described in details, i.e.,: the coercive tools, the routes and the *modus operandi* used by traffickers in the recruitment, the transfer and the exploitation of women. In the following three cases, Italy is reported as the destination country of the victims: *Attorney General of the Federation v. Constance Omoruyi* (2006); *Attorney General of the Federation v. Samuel Emwirovbankhoe* (2008); *Federal Republic of Nigeria v. Favour Anware Okwuode* (2009). The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research (UNICRI) has conducted several qualitative research on human trafficking. As far as Nigerian trafficking in women towards Italy three detailed reports, whereby life stories of victims are recalled, shall be mentioned, i.e.: *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy: The Data, the Stories, the Social Services*, (2010), *Trafficking on Nigerian Girls to Italy* (2003), *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to*

¹² It is the only United Nations entity focusing on the criminal justice element of these crimes; the work that UNODC does to combat human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants is underpinned by the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its protocols on trafficking in persons

Italy (2003). These last publications are the result of a simultaneous and comparative analysis between trafficking in Nigeria and Italy, respectively as trafficked women's country of origin and country of destination of the victims.

For a more general overview on trafficking offence worldwide, the US Department of State annually publishes the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, whose aim is to illustrate the main efforts and policies undertaken by different states to prevent and combat the trade in humans. It provides an analysis of both Italian and Nigerian policies on prevention and prosecution of trafficking offences and on assistance programmes for the victims

When focusing only on trafficking in women from Nigeria to Italy, the number of official sources for reliable data decreases. The available data from the Department for Equal Opportunities (through its National Observatory on Trafficking) show almost the same trends as the Eurostat report: From 2003 to 2006, the number of Nigerian persons lured into trafficking attained a significant 25% increase rate (table 1.4).

Table No. 2 Countries of origin and number of the victims of trafficking (adults and minors) registered by the social services (ex art. 18) – 2003 - 2006 (Calls for proposals No. 4 and No. 7) (Fluctuations in absolute value and %)						
Countries	Call No. 4 (2003)		Call No. 7 (2006)		Fluctuations – April, 2003 – 2006	
	a.v.	%	a.v.	%	a.v.	%
Nigeria	588	31.7	735	41.2	147	+25.0
Morocco	-		-	-	-	-
Albania	129	7.0	91	5.1	-38	-29.5
Moldavia	141	7.6	77	4.3	-64	-45.4
Romania	485	26.2	461	25.8	-24	-5
Ukraine	138	7.4	65	3.6	-73	-52.8
Russia	84	4.5	53	3.1	-31	-36.9
Others	288	15.5	301	16.9	13	4.5
Total	1,853	100.0	1,783	100	-70	-3.7

Source: elaboration by PARSEC based on data of the Department for Equal Opportunities

Table 1.4

and migrant smuggling.

The National Anti-Mafia Directorate (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia, DNA¹³) publishes each year a report aimed at giving details on all illicit activities conducted by organised crime groups within Italian borders, including Nigerian trafficking for sexual exploitation. Statistics on Official Crime (“Statistiche della criminalità” and “Statistiche della delittuosità”) have recently been computerized and should theoretically provide information on crime victims (age, place of birth, residency); nevertheless this type of information is not compulsory and is often neglected. This makes it difficult to gather information on national victims, let alone immigrants as victims of crime. The periodical *Report on Crime and Security in Italy* (promoted by the Home Office) barely draws a short analysis of Nigerian trafficking criminality in Italy with a special focus on illegal drug trades (see *Rapporto sulla Criminalità e la Sicurezza in Italia*, 2010). The data of the tables included in this report within the section on *Migration and Crime* confirm the positive trend of Nigerian migration flows towards Italy.

Table 1.5 shows the number of people reported for illegal entry in Italy subdivided according to citizenship and gender in 2010; as shown below, the Nigerian stands out as the fourth largest group.

Table 1.5 - People reported for illegal entry (D.LGS. 298/1998 ART.10 BIS) divided for citizenship and gender (data extracted March 18, 2010)

Period	Total N.	Women	Expelled	The rank of the most numerous nationality				
				1°	2°	3°	4°	5°
August	2432	160						
September	3460	517						
October	3326	480						
November	2392	331						
December	1458	206		Maro cco	Tuni sia	Nige ria	Chin a	Sene gal
2009 (August - December)	13068	1794	15,1	1888	1254	843	784	776
January	1362	180						
February	1690	240						
March	1811	227						
April	1987	305		Maro cco	Chin a	Nige ria	Tuni sia	Sene gal
2010 (January - April)	6850	952	33,7	773	576	470	467	463
				Maro cco	Tuni sia	Chin a	Nige ria	Sene gal
August 2009 - April 2010	19918	2746	21,5	2661	1721	1360	1313	1239

¹³ It is an organism operating under the Ministry of Justice formed by a National anti-Mafia prosecutor and 20 prosecutors who are the national anti-Mafia prosecutors. The DNA performs the duties of coordination of the investigations conducted by the Anti-Mafia departments (DDA) concerning the

Ultimately, the National Office Against Racial Discrimination (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali, UNAR¹⁴) shows a very interesting finding: the recent switch towards the female gender in the migration flows. According to this agency such a process started in the 1980s and became significant in the 2000s. Relating to migrants from Africa, the Nations with the highest percentages of female migrants are: Madagascar and Cape Verde (over 70%), Nigeria, Kenya and Ethiopia (about 60%).

On the Nigerian front, the Nigerian Governmental Agency for Prohibition Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) is the official agency: It publishes some data on convicted persons for trafficking offences and on assisted victims. However, the extent of such information remains quite limited and outdated.

The figures produced by international and governmental organizations are important to understand trafficking macro-trends such as the extent of the crime or the EU regional patterns. In fact, so far, most of the studies have dealt with the broad-spectrum of international trafficking dynamics. Conversely, a limited number of studies has inquired after the distinctive features and trends occurring in national cases. In this regard, the most reliable primary sources in the Italian panorama are represented by case files and NGOs' research.

Concerning the case files, recent criminal proceedings and investigations have highlighted in clear terms the *modus operandi* of Nigerian criminal cells that are rooted in Italy: Court of Assizes, Section IV, judgment no. 3/2010; Investigation *SAHEL 2* (coordinated by the Anti-Mafia District Unit of L'Aquila); Investigation *Shopping* (coordinated by the Anti-Mafia District Unit of L'Aquila); Investigation *Trolley* (coordinated by the Anti-Mafia District Unit of Bologna); *Operazione Caronte* (coordinated by Anti-Mafia District Unit of Genova). In some of such cases, the NGOs assisting the trafficked victims and collecting their first eyewitness accounts have played a core role for the prosecution of criminals: they have informed the authority on the occurrence of the trafficking offence by supporting the victims to report against their persecutors (e.g., see *SAHEL 2*, case of Lilian vs. Victoria Ofiebe, Evans Aimerohé, Rose Mary Damisah, Edith Aiyuduebie and Evans Aiwekhoe).

offences committed by organized crime groups.

¹⁴ The UNAR was established in 2003 by the Ministry of the Interior in Italy to address the issues of racism and discrimination and provide statistics on cases related to racial or ethnic discrimination. Since 2005, it has been publishing data on discrimination cases that reach the office through a toll-free number. In 2007, for instance, 265 discrimination incidents have been reported compared to 282 in 2005

By collecting trafficked women's biographies, the NGOs usually apply an ethnographic approach which contributes to develop an in-depth analysis of the trafficking offence (that explains who, where, when, why and how the crime occurs). Through such an approach is possible to examine the relationships between the different actors who partake in the trade (Savona and Stefanizzi, 2010).

Concerning this last point, a number of scholars and observers have described the way how women are lured into trafficking industry: Aghatise 2004; Beneduce 2003; Carchedi et al. 2007; Carling 2005; Di Nicola et. al. 2009; Maragnani & Aikpitanyi 2006; Okojies 2003, 2009; Prina 2003; Siegel and De Blank 2010.

In the Maragnani, Siegel and De Blank, and Prina's contributions a number of cases and empirical evidences of women lured into the sex industry are provided: these anecdotal evidences show that women often take an active part in the business because of a criminal *modus operandi* which leads the victims to become the accomplices of their persecutors over time. The Siegel's analysis focuses mainly on the female offenders in the sex market and their mobility in the trafficking hierarchy. In this regard, the author highlights the different positions of female offenders based on the women's degree of independence in their management of the trafficking business and their relationships with male accomplices. Through these variables, the author identifies three main figures of female offenders: a. the supporters; b. the partners in crime; c. the madams (Siegel 2011).

In a more general way, Di Nicola and Carling describes the Nigerian trafficking system from recruiting of girls in Nigeria to their final exploitation in Italy. Analysing all the steps of this illicit trade, Carling terms it as a self-reproducing system.

Such a characteristic is reported also in the analysis of Carchedi who uses the terms *carriera prostituzionale* (career in the prostitution) to speak about the past trafficked women who were able to become the entrepreneurs of the sex industry (that is thus a cyclic system). Through this system, according the author, the number of Nigerian trafficked women grew significantly in the Italian sex market.

Except for some scholars, in the Italian literature the THB issues has been debated mainly by non academic observers and confined within the area of an investigative journalism. Furthermore, the analysis of the existing data on the phenomenon highlights the existence of a large amount of non-academic material (such as personal accounts)

produced by the former clients of prostitutes and trafficking victims (through some new communication channels such as internet blogs or web sites: e.g., <http://maschileplurale.it>). The personal accounts of Isoke Aikpitany, a former trafficking victim, must be mentioned: she wrote two biographies where her own story and those of other Nigerian trafficked women are reported (*Le Ragazze di Benin City*, 2007; *500 storie vere sulla tratta delle ragazze africane in Italia*, 2011). These firsthand reports represent an important source that should not be underestimated. However, because of its highly personal nature¹⁵, this material must be used with circumspection in academic research: the first-hand accounts needs to be compared with the outcomes and findings coming from others sources and methodologies.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that in the Italian debate the prostitution of the migrant women is often read through the *oppression paradigm* (see *paragraph 1.4*), that it is supported by non governmental organizations and Catholic groups. This approach does not recognize prostitution as a work activity and indissolubly ties prostitution to the THB offence and slavery-like practices. Such a perspective spread among Italian observers of the phenomenon makes more difficult to find unbiased studies and research in this field.

In conclusion, even though the mobility of Nigerian women within the trafficking hierarchy has been confirmed by some scholars, hardly anything has been done to explain how and why the trafficked women move from the *status* of victim up to the role of entrepreneurs in the business. In this way, the *grey areas* in trafficking in Nigerian women (as defined in the *paragraph 1.1.2*) and the intermediates roles can be truly regarded as a rather new research question.

¹⁵ For evidence from women on trafficking, see: Bonetti and Pozzi, 2012; Prina, 2003.

1.4 Criminological Debate on Prostitution of Migrant Women

There are two main contrasting positions in the debate regarding the prostitution of migrant women: the moral approach¹⁶ and the sex-work approach. The moral approach (launched by some non-governmental organizations and radical feminists) emphasizes the violence and the exploitation suffered by the women who sell sex and reject the idea that migrants may “use commercial sex for personal and instrumental ends” (Agustín 2005: 96). From this perspective, the migrant women who work in the sex market are labelled *victims*. In opposition to this view, the sex-work approach (Oude Breuil et al. 2011: 33) considers prostitution to be a legitimate profession and recognizes that migrant women may play an active and independent role in the sex market. The advocates of this view refer to migrant women engaged in prostitution as *sex workers* and aim at improving their working conditions.

For the purposes of this study, it is interesting to note the stereotypes that the debate on the topic has contributed to produce. In fact, when the researcher who approaches the THB issue faces with the two contrasting and generalized images related to the actors involved in the trade, he or she often resorts to a dualistic view (Agustín 2006; Oude Breuil et al. 2011). By using such an approach, the researcher thinks that trafficking offenses do not allow for gray areas.

In the moral approach, the general tendency is to represent the trafficked women as passive victims. This image contributes to the creation of stereotypes and includes all the relationships between the trafficked women and the trafficking offenders within the victim/perpetrator model (Beneduce 2003; Oude Breuil et al. 2011; Siegel 2011). In the real world, such relationships cannot be fully described by this binary classification¹⁷: these relationships are more complex and there are confusing social interactions that tend to change over time (Kleemans 2011).

The Nigerian traffickers, particularly during the recruitment phase, are relatives, friends, boyfriends or husbands of the victims. In a 2002 community-based study to estimate the extent of sexual trafficking in Benin City (conducted by the Women’s Health and

¹⁶ Weitzer (2007) terms this approach as a “moral crusade”(447) or as the “oppression paradigm” (Weitzer 2012: 1339).

¹⁷ As Weitzer (2012) states “such complexities, nuances, and variations are glossed over in the oppression paradigm, a perspective that disregards a wealth of social science research on the sex industry”(1368).

Action Research Centre), over 60% of the respondents¹⁸ reported that friends and relatives were the most likely to offer assistance to travel abroad (UNODC/UNICRI 2003). Kinship between the victim and the trafficker is common (Kleemans 2011; Carling 2006; Okojie 2009).

In regard to the particular relationships between the traffickers and their victims, a UNICRI field survey on the trafficking of Nigerian minors and women to Italy¹⁹ reported the results of in-depth interviews with 29 Nigerian women who experienced trafficking. Concerning the recruitment systems, 18 of the interviewees stated that they were sought out by their recruiters, 4 interviewees admitted that they went in search of their recruiters, and 2 respondents claimed they experienced both methods of recruitment (UNODC/UNICRI 2003). These data show that some trafficked women leave their native country with the help of traffickers and “do know what is ahead of them” (Agustín 2005: 101).

Moreover, the relationship between the victim and her madam is often based on the dual role that madam plays in the trade industry: the madam is a former trafficking victim and a current organizer of the illicit business of human trafficking²⁰. As a consequence, the trafficked woman occasionally does not perceive that she is exploited by her madam. The victim often sees in her madam a ‘friend’ who suffered in the past her same troubles. “If a woman tells you to go on the street you accept because she is like you, she has already done so. But if it is a man you would say «make a cut on the stomach and you go!». You respect them because at least they know what they are talking about” (quoted in Prina 2003: 82).

Contrary to the moral approach, which clearly underestimates the commercial use of sex market by some former trafficked women, the advocates of the sex-work approach emphasize the personal responsibility of the migrant women when choosing prostitution (Kelly 2003). This approach fails to provide a complete view of trafficking in women for two main reasons. First, it considers irrelevant the harsh living conditions that cause

¹⁸ For this field survey, 1,456 women aged 15-30 years were randomly selected. The study investigated the knowledge and experiences of sexual trafficking of Nigerian women.

¹⁹ This field study dates 2003 and was carried out both in Italy (as destination country) and in Nigeria (as origin country).

²⁰ For contributions on migration as a business, see: Salt and Stein 1997.

the migrant women to enter this illegal business²¹ (Kelly et al. 2005; Konrad 2002; Obokata 2006a, 2006b). Second, it underestimates the role of some other agents or actors, i.e., the victims' parents, in forcing the women to enter the sex market. Based on a strong patriarchal family structure, the parents and husbands are able to exercise a real authority over their trafficked daughters or wives to push them to stay in the trafficking business (Aghatise 2007; Okojie 2009; Prina 2003).

Concerning the peculiar phenomenon of the trafficking of Nigerian women, the sex-work view fails to give the proper relevance to the high level of psychological conditioning that traffickers create in their victims using magic rites (such as the voodoo rites) that are strongly rooted in the Nigerian culture.

A failure to recognize the factors noted above indicates that this approach underestimates cases in which the trafficked women were deceived or forced to prostitute themselves.

According several authors, both the above mentioned theories likely fail to address the actual issues faced by the trafficked women (Agustín 2005; Oude Breuil et al. 2011; Kelly 2003; Weitzer 2007), too “much energy goes into attempting to prove that one or the other of these visions is truer” (Agustín 2005: 97) .

What these authors criticize to the dominant literature on the topic is its focus on the classification of the role of migrant women in the sex market based on their degree of consent to prostitution (Agustín 2005; Carchedi et al. 2007; Kelly 2003). By emphasizing this issue, the debate promotes indeed a reading of the phenomenon on the ground of some generalized images, e.g., victims vs. sex workers and innocent women vs. corrupt women (Agustín 2006; Kleemans 2011; Oude Breuil et al. 2011). The polarization of these categories makes difficult to understand all the multiple roles that the individuals hold in the trade industry: this determines a misleading representation of the circumstances and situations related to the trafficking issue.

The figure of the trafficking victim is particularly likely to be represented with distinctive physical and psychological features that are sometimes far from the real circumstances. The trafficking victim is usually depicted as a black, underage woman

²¹ Among the harsh living conditions, the so-called push factors of migration can be included, which refer to the social and economic conditions that cause individuals to migrate from their native countries (such as the lack of employment opportunities or a low level of gender equality).

who lives in a clear state of need and who is eager to get some form of help. Despite this widespread idea, some empirical research studies have pointed out that individuals who have experienced trafficking do not often regard themselves in such a way; The trafficked women do not want to be enclosed in the category of a passive, innocent and ignorant individual (Siegel 2011; Agustín 2006).

In an interview the author conducted with Teresa Albano (the representative of the Focus Group on Trafficking at the International Organization for Migration in Italy), the latter provoked the author by uttering following words: "How do you imagine a victim to be like? We usually expect her to be a poor and black woman begging for help. We should overcome this idea of victim because, basically, it does not exist" (interview no.4). As this statement clearly emphasizes, a false representation of the individuals who are involved in offences makes it harder to find a victimized person²² because no one can ever fully embody a stereotype.

As Weitzer (2012) notes "the experiences of trafficked persons, in the migration process and in their working conditions, range along a broad continuum. Some individuals' experiences fit the oppression model well, while others' cluster at the opposite end" (1345).

1.4.1 Overview of Approaches and Policies to Trafficking and Prostitution

In recent years, the human trafficking issue has been analysed under different perspectives: from the economical studies to the anthropological and sociological ones. Such an extensive literature shows trafficking as a multi-dimensional problem.

The state policies in undermining trafficking offences have been widely influenced by academic research findings, whose approaches can be grouped in the following thematic categories²³ (UNICRI, 2003):

- 1) *A moral problem*: this approach tends to condemn prostitution (stemming from a moral and ethical point of view) and not to recognise it as a work activity. Prostitution is seen as one of the main causes of the trafficking phenomenon and is therefore criminalised. Actions against trafficking, therefore, are aimed at punishing the parties involved. This places women in prostitution at risk of

²² For more information on the concept of women's victimization, see: Erez, 2001; Kelly, 1999.

²³ See Foundation of Women's Forum, 1998.

punishment instead of being regarded as possible victims of a violent action performed by other individuals.

- 2) *A criminal problem*: this approach recognises trafficking as a complex criminal offence with a trans-national vocation. Such a crime is often included among Mafia-type offences. This approach stresses the importance to introduce heavier punishments and encourage international police cooperation as well as further measures which would eventually lead to more effective prosecution and conviction. The prosecution of criminals is placed, therefore, at the first place and the trafficked women's accounts are regarded, firstly, as important evidences that may increase the number of convicted offenders.
- 3) *A public order problem*: this approach emphasizes the commercial sex work (mainly the street prostitution) as an activity that causes problems related to public order and health. Trafficking increases local prostitution and potentially intensifies all the associated problems. This approach aims at increasing control over prostitution, for instance, introducing medical examination.
- 4) *A migration problem*: this approach focuses on the effects of human trafficking in relation to the migration trends and, firstly, in relation to illegal migrants within the state borders. Trafficking is regarded as a tool encouraging illegal migration and in this sense it must be limited through, for example, stricter border inspections.
- 5) *A human rights problem*: this approach focuses on the person. The stress is on the breach of human rights suffered by people lured in the trade. Trafficking is therefore regarded as a new form of slavery-like practice or of a torture. Before such inhuman treatments the states have a double duty: 1) the moral and legal concern to eradicate trafficking; 2) the victims' protection and support aimed at their social reintegration and empowerment. This approach triggers the debate on sex labour: Whenever it is exercised as a free choice of the individual the state shall guarantee the sex workers fair and safe working and living conditions, whilst all forms of sex labour exploitation must be punished (debt bondage and deprivation of freedom of movement).

- 6) *A labour issue problem*: this approach emphasises the poor living and working conditions in the countries of origin of trafficked people. Migration, also in its illegal forms, is chosen by people to find better work opportunities. Trafficking in women is read as the result of the poor legal and social position of women in most societies (as women, workers and migrants). This approach emphasizes the need to improve labour opportunities and working conditions, pensions and state benefits. For women who work in the sex market, safe and fair working conditions must be guaranteed.

1.5 Sociological Theories: Social Capital and Crime

In the two following paragraphs, some of the main sociological theories regarding social capital and female offenders are argued. Such a theoretical framework provides the conceptual grounds to read the phenomenon within a cause/effect relationship.

In particular the above mentioned criminological theories help to recognise those characteristics of Nigerian THB that make it such a peculiar case; the theories on the social capital applied to the organised crime groups explains why Nigerian traffickers adopt a self-producing *modus operandi* that strengthen their criminal action. The current criminological theories on female criminality help to understand why Nigerian trafficking is a female oriented business.

Social capital is broadly defined “as the set of rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity, and trust embedded in social relations, social structures, and society’s institutional arrangements that enables members to achieve their individual and community objectives” (Narayan 1997: 50). There are currently a high number of definitions of social capital but each of them emphasises the importance of social relations and bonds in achieving goals.

In his famous article, *Bowling Alone*, Putnam refers to "social capital" as those “features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam 1993: 167). In this way, the social capital has to be differed from the human capital which concerns tools and training that enhance individual productivity. According to Putnam's view, social capital plays an important role in the health of democratic states because

dense networks of social interaction reduce the individual opportunism: what Putnam criticizes in the modern society is therefore the loss of such social interactions among people who show indeed a lower degree of interest for the public and associative life.

While Putnam ties the concept of the social capital to the society as a whole, Bourdieu (1980) and Coleman (1993a, 1993b) use as units of analysis the individuals (or small groups such as the family) and focus on the benefits accrued to individuals by virtue of their relations with others (Portes 2000). In this regard, the scholar Bourdieu emphasises how people intentionally build up their relations for the benefits that they will receive later (Bourdieu 1985), while Burt emphasises that “the people who do better are somehow better connected” (Burt, 2008:32). Analysing the different usage of the social capital concept, Portes highlights the shift in its meaning when it is referred to individuals or to nations:

“The social capital as a property of cities or nations is qualitatively distinct from its individual version. (...) For instance, the right "connections" allow certain persons to gain access to profitable public contracts and bypass regulations binding on others. "Individual" social capital in such instances consists precisely in the ability to undermine "collective" social capital, defined as civic spirit grounded on impartial application of the laws” (Portes 2000: 4).

Such a distinction clearly underlines the fact that social capital can be regarded as a double-edged sword because of its positive and negative social effects. The current literature tends to use social capital with a positive meaning, emphasising its reverse relations with crimes based on two main empirical observations: (a) social capital decreases the costs of social transactions and allows peaceful resolution of the conflicts; (b) “communities with stronger ties among its members are better equipped to organize themselves to overcome the free-rider problem of collective action” (Lederman, Loayza, and Mene´ndez 2002: 510).

In spite of these assumptions, it has been demonstrated that stronger social interactions can also allow individuals involved in criminal activities to more easily exchange information and know-how, that diminish the costs of crime. As noticed by Kleemans and Poot (2008), the organised crime groups give great importance to the social relations and trust²⁴. The criminal usage of social capital is explained by Lederman,

²⁴ Because social relations play an important role in organized crime, the *social opportunity structure* (social ties providing access to profitable criminal opportunities) is extremely important for explaining

Loayza, and Mene´ndez (2002) who have remarked that in societies with a high social capital the crime rate relevantly decreases but social capital “has the potential to induce more crime and violence when it is concentrated in particular groups, such as gangs, ethnic clans, and closed neighbourhoods, and is not disseminated throughout society” (516).

Relating to these two different effects of social capital, Field (2004) distinguishes two main types of social bonds:

- Productive social networks: whose benefits are both for the individuals, who are part of them, and the society;
- Negative networks: whose benefits are only for the individuals inside the network, producing negative effects for the rest of the society.

According to Field the negative networks develop more easily in an unstable and violent social background. In fact, in front of the lack of legal structural opportunity organised crime groups are seen by people as a chance to survive: this is the case of women inhabiting very poor countries for whom trafficking systems may represent the only way to escape their living conditions (Field, 2004). Similar to each social group, the members of such negative networks share values and rules, although their accordance with these rules is usually more compelling and binding²⁵.

Elaborating upon the social structure of organised crime groups, Kleemans and Van de Bunt have pointed out how the social ties and the transfer of knowledge and contacts create a *social snowball effect* through which the “starters” in the organisation arrive to generate a new illegal enterprise, determining therefore the self reproducing of the crime:

“[P]eople get in touch with organized crime activities through their social relations and, as they proceed, their dependence on the resources of other people (such as money, knowledge and contacts) gradually declines; subsequently they choose their own ways,

involvement of the individuals in organized crime (Kleemand and Poot 2008: 75).

²⁵ In the Sicilian Mafia, for instance, once the individual enters in the organisation, he is constraint to respect Mafia rules forever, otherwise his life will be jeopardised by the violent revenge of other affiliated. In fact, in order to pursue their interests and goals, the “negative networks” employ illegal methods using violence and threats.

generating new criminal associations, and attracting people from their own social environment, and the story repeats itself” (Kleemans and de Poot 2008, 79)

Such a theory combined with the concept of grey area can help us understand vertical mobility of individuals lured into Nigerian trafficking.

1.5.1 Theories on Women Offenders

According to the majority of scholars the male crime rate exceeds that of female universally, in all nations, in all communities, among all age groups and in all periods of history for which statistics are available (Hagan, 2002:76). For a long time, this fact caused a general lack of interest for women offenders, who started to be studied as a distinctive group only in the 1960s and in the 1970s consequently to feminist thinking and movements spread in those years. Together with the consolidation of a new status for woman in the modern society, a new interest for research on female criminality arose.

Before that period, women as offenders were simply incorporated within the general theories of criminology. The first one of these theories explained the deviancy through the concept of a *criminal atavism* ascribed to the biological determinism. According to this theory, the biological abnormalities of criminals were the main cause of their deviant behaviours. Relating to the particular group of women offenders, Cesare Lombroso (one of the most important theorists of this approach) considered them as biologically dysfunctional individuals: women offenders had more masculine physical and psychological features²⁶ (such as an excess of body hair) and lacked of maternal instincts and passivity and weakness of female gender. In Lombroso’s point of view, because women were biologically inferior to men, they were usually incapable of deviant acts. Supporting the Lombroso’s theory, Freud (1933) found that female criminality was caused from a masculinity complex that was stronger in women who committed crimes.

The first expansive wave of feminist movement, in the 1920s and 1930s, ended with the attribution of some political and civil rights to women (mainly in America and in the United Kingdom), while the second wave of feminism, which began in the 1960s, was

²⁶ Some year later, Freud psychiatric explanations based on inherent female traits became very popular (see Freud, 1933).

characterised by a worldwide movement of liberation for women complaining about the oppressive atmosphere in which women were treated inequitably in social, political, and economic realms. In such a social and political scenario, also the field of criminology was regarded as being male-centred (Daly & Chesney-Lind, 1988:505; Leonard, 1982).

Criminologists, mostly female, dismissed biological and psychological theories of prior criminologists and provided new explanations for the alleged increased in female offending reported in those years: in this regard, the texts of Freda Adler and Rita Simon represent the first examples of a feminist approach.

The liberation thesis: in his book, *Sisters in Crime*, Adler suggests that the progressive changes in the status of women in the most important social arenas (such as family, marriage, employment, and social position), brought by the movement of liberation, has allowed them to assume typical male roles and to be more crime-prone as well: “In the same way that women are demanding equal opportunity in fields of legitimate endeavour, a similar number of determined women are forcing their way into the world of major crimes” (Adler 1975: 13). According this theory, modern society causes a process of “masculinisation” of women which is enhanced, for instance, by competition in workplaces where women are required to adopt certain traditional masculine characteristics such as assertiveness, aggressiveness, and risk-taking. The consequence of these new women’s roles and functions is the growing rate of female criminality and, consequently, a reduction in the gap between male and female crime rates. In this sense, Adler considers that the movement of liberation creates new structural opportunities for women in crime. Concerning the concept of situational opportunity, Simon emphasises its linkage with the type of crime committed: according to this author the former limited chance for women to access in labour market has determined their lower involvement in certain types of crimes such as fraud, scam and theft (Williams III and McShane, 2009). In this way, Simon explains the increase of female crime in that period particularly in property offences, especially white collar offences involving small and medium amount of money (Hagan, 2002).

Despite the liberation theory was widely criticised and its prediction for higher female criminal rate did not come true, Adler's approach influenced the research on the sector during all the 1990s.

A major literature is currently developing on gender and crime, whereby female criminality is mostly used as a variable to explain deviant behaviour such as in the power-control theory (Hagan, 2002: William III and McSchane 2009):

The power-control theory: In *Structural Criminology*, John Hagan emphasises how the family structure determines social gender-equality and in turn social distribution of delinquency. Hagan recognises two types of family structures: the patriarchal family and the egalitarian family. In the paternalistic or patriarchal family, the father holds the traditional role of sole breadwinner, while the mother has only menial jobs or remains at home to handle domestic affairs. Here the father's experience of control over others or being controlled is reproduced in the household. In this family's structure, the sons are granted greater freedom as they are prepared for the traditional male role symbolized by their fathers and therefore are encouraged and allowed to "experiment" and take risks, while the daughters are trained to the *cult of domesticity* under the close supervision of their mothers (preparing them for lives oriented towards domestic labour). In this way, daughters are closely monitored so that participation in deviant or delinquent activity is unlikely. In the egalitarian family the differences between the mothers' and fathers' work roles are significantly reduced and therefore responsibility for child education is shared. In such a family the close supervision over females, featured in the paternalistic family, does not take place. Here, without the presence of the father, the mother's supervision over her children is not as intense as in the paternalistic family and, in fact, children of both sexes may be encouraged to experiment with risk taking (Siegel, 1992).

In conclusion, Hagan highlights that in societies where the patriarchal family is the most popular model the gender gap between sons and daughters in criminal behaviours is wide. On the contrary, more egalitarian relationships among family members give equal opportunity to boys and girls to participate in criminal activities (Williams III and MacShane, 2009): it means that a balanced family structure reduces the disparities in delinquency between genders and that in unbalanced family structures those differences are perpetuated (Hagan, 2002: 81).

Both the liberation theory and the power-control theory read the higher rate of the female criminality as an effect of the modern Western societies, that are characterized by gender equality and a participation of the women in the past male-dominated realms. According these approaches, in fact, the more active role of women in the economic and social life explains the rise of a female criminality in property crimes (e.g., larceny, fraud and forgery), and more recently in assaultive crimes and drinking-related offenses²⁷.

In opposition to these perspectives, the **adversity theory** claims that higher female-to-male arrest levels are due to social structural conditions in which women face an economic marginalization, such as higher rates of female unemployment or more female-headed households (Steffensmeir and Haynie 2000). The presence of such adverse economic circumstances for women make possible to predict an higher rate of women's criminality (especially in the property crimes).

Although contrasting explanations of female criminality, it is interesting to note that these current criminological theories give a relevance to the socio-cultural context where crimes occur²⁸; a clear understanding of female criminality, indeed, requires an assessment of how gender issues and stereotypes influence the involvement of women in crime. Feminist research has indicated in clear terms the importance of considering the reasons that cause females to play an active part in criminal business, whereby the specific needs and social positions of women must be acknowledged (Hepburn and Simon 2006; Heidenson 1985). This seems particularly true when Nigerian trade in human beings must be explained. Only after taking into account the gender inequality and poor living conditions of Nigerian society, is it possible to understand why trafficking is considered by many women: trafficking represents one of the few chances available to females to achieve the economic independence and a socially recognized status (Beneduce 2003; Salt and Stein 1997; Siegel 2011). Regarding Nigerian female

²⁷ However, it needs to be highlighted that the gender gap in violent crimes, such as homicide or robbery and drug law violations, has remained fairly consistent over the past 40 years.

²⁸ In this regard, for instance, Anderson and O'Connell Davidson have noted how the demand for slaves in all sex markets "is a socially, culturally and historically determined matter" (Anderson and O'Connell Davidson 2003: 41) that should only be analyzed in its original context. The same relevance of the cultural background is assumed in the comparative research of Hepburn and Simon, who emphasize how specific cultural, economic, environmental, and geopolitical factors contribute to each nation's trafficking problems (Hepburn and Simon 2006).

criminality, how social status encourages female conformity even in deviant behaviour must be considered: as Agboola (2011) states “the kind of crimes that are committed by women, like those committed by men, reflect the gender defined social roles that are available to them” (201)²⁹.

²⁹ For contributions on gender disparity and criminal behaviors in Nigerian society, sees: Agboola and

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Rationale to a Vertical Mobility Approach: a New Proposal

As mentioned in Chapter I, some empirical studies have demonstrated how a number of the trafficked women have taken a more active role in the business by actually becoming facilitators or entrepreneurs in the form of “madams” (Aghatise 2004; Okojies 2009; Siegel and De Blank 2010; Siegel 2011). An explanation of the reasons why the relationships between the individuals lured into trafficking are so dynamics and unclear is provided by Siegel’s *vertical mobility* theory, which refers “to [the] changing position of women within the organizational side of the sex sector” (Siegel 2011). Such a mobility makes difficult to draw sharp dividing lines between the two opposing figures of the victim and perpetrator because the characters can hold *intermediate positions*³⁰.

Therefore, when thinking to such ambiguous relationships and roles in the THB any binary classifications – e.g., victims/sex workers, victims/offenders, 'good' and innocent women/bad and corrupted women - must be abandoned in favour of other approaches. In the light of the limits of a *Manichean*³¹ interpretations, the author proposes a different approach aimed at highlighting the relevant positions that women hold in the trafficking offences.

According to the definition provided by the UN Trafficking Protocol, the abuse of a state of vulnerability (see Chapter 1, paragraph *I.1.4*) stands out as one of the main elements to identify a victim of trafficking offence: that is, the victim is in a position of vulnerability (which is abused by the traffickers) with little or no chances to self-determine his or her living conditions. Conversely, the trafficking offender is an individual who recruits, transfers or harbours other persons by means of coercion, threat

Oluwadare 2011.

³⁰ In order to further elucidate this matter, the complex relationships between the madams and their trafficked girls has been mentioned: e.g., the madams’ dual role and the madam’s favourite (Chapter I).

³¹ The *Manichaeism* is a dualistic philosophy dividing the world between good and evil principles. The adjective *manichean* is widely applied to describe a moral dualism, where good and evil are clearly defined.

and deception with the final intent to exploit them. In an intermediate category, there are the individuals who play certain roles in the trafficking business so that they can be regarded neither as victims nor as offenders; based on the chance for the individuals lured in the trade to self-determine their actions and lives, the table below represents the above mentioned middle position.

<i>No self determination</i>	VICTIMS	People who live a status of vulnerability, including the serious socio-economic conditions in the origin country	Coerced Threatened Deceived
<i>Supposed no self determination</i> <i>Or</i> <i>Supposed self determination</i>	Madam's favourite Independent Prostitute Madam forced by other individuals or by organised crime groups	Women live in a condition of psychological dependency from their traffickers	Live the simultaneous condition of victim and Offence
<i>Self determination</i>	OFFENDER	Organised in criminal network	Intent to exploit the labour of other through the means of coercion, threat and deception

Table 2.1

In order to better define the role of those characters occupying the grey area (table 2.1), it can be useful to draw a further table based on the two following variables:

- I. Prostitution, the most common type of *exploitation* experienced by the majority of Nigerian women lured into trafficking in Italy;
- II. Coercion, read both as a physical and psychological violence.

The two variables have a pure face value and are not to be read under a relationship of dependence.

Through the table 2.2, the intermediate positions within the victim/offender model.

		Coercion		
		use coercion	no use coercion	Subject to coercion
Exploitation	Volunteer Prostitution	Madam a)	Prostitute b)	Prostitute* c)
	Forced prostitution	Madam's favourite* d)	Victim e)	Victim Madam* f)
	No prostitution	Madam g)	GATE h)	Victim i)

Table 2.2

In the first column of the table 2.2, the variable I) Prostitution implies three modes: 1. volunteer prostitution; 2. forced prostitution; 3. no prostitution.

In the first row of the same table, the variable II) Coercion is represented by other three different modes: 1. use of coercion; 2. no use of coercion; 3. subject to coercion.

By a cross reading of the two variables, the hypothetical roles held by the characters involved in the illegal trade can be drawn: the box *a*) represents, for instance, a common position of a madam who uses violence against her trafficked girls (mode “use of coercion”) and who is a sex worker at the same time (mode “volunteer prostitution”): several empirical studies, indeed, show that a part of madams continues to work as prostitutes with the main purpose to teach their trafficked girls how the job must be performed (Oude Breuil et al. 2011).

The boxes *a*), *b*), *e*), *g*) and *i*) show some typical roles held by the individuals lured into trafficking, such as the case of the trafficked victim who does not use violence against anyone and who is forced by other individuals to prostitute herself (in box *e*).

The other boxes represent much more complex roles: in the box *d*), for instance, the role of the madam’s favourite is pointed out. The favourite uses coercion against other trafficked girls (in accordance with her task of overseeing the girls on behalf of her madam) and she is forced by her madam to work as a prostitute to pay off her debts. The

most peculiar element characterising this female actor is her dual role in the trafficking offence: she is a trafficking victim and a madam's accomplice at the same time.

Boxes *c*) and *f*) show other critical positions which are actually difficult to define: box *f*) represents the condition of a person who is subjugated by means of force, or coercion, and who is obliged to prostitute herself. In such a state of subjugation is typically read the victim. However, according to women's accounts some *madams* have been obliged to enter the trafficking business and forced to continue to prostitute themselves by their acquaintances (Aikpitanyi 2011). Because a madam inhabits the contradictory position of having experienced the harsh living conditions and the day-to-day problems of trafficked women (and now contributing to such conditions and problems), she plays an ambiguous dual role in the THB industry; it becomes even more ambivalent when she has not completely overcome the state of victimization. When the madam is used by other individuals as a tool to perform criminal acts she can be included in the box *f*) (such unusual role of madam is better argued in Chapter V, *paragraph 5.3.1*).

For women working in the sex market who experienced trafficking in the past, it is very difficult to understand whether or not they are free to choose prostitution as their job. When looking at their position in the trade, several elements must be taken into account, i.e., the difficult living conditions that the former African trafficked women may experience on a daily basis in Italy in terms of: a. lack of other employment opportunities, b. social and cultural stigmatization and c. irregularity of the judicial status. This condition of social marginalization automatically push women to consider sex work as the only chance for the survival (Augustin 2005). Furthermore, trafficked women have been subjected to a massive psychological conditioning (through magic and voodoo rites) during all the phases of trafficking (DNA 2012; Okojie 1992): such a state of psychological subjugation deeply influences the way how these women approach life. In this line of thought, that figure of Nigerian prostitute may be included in box *c*): that is, a person who is subjected to some forms of coercion and who lives a state of vulnerability.

The role of the Nigerian sex worker within THB industry changes when she works in the street aimed at earning enough money to bring in Italy a girl to exploit in her place. In such a case, the sex worker is closer to become a partner in crime with their traffickers.

Summarizing the main features of middle positions within the victim/trafficking model (in the table 2.2), it can be stated that individuals who hold such roles usually behave as follows:

- They use coercion against other trafficked women but are forced into prostitution at the same time. That is, the case of the madam's favourite and the madam's subjected to coercion by others;
- They prostitute themselves with the intent to bring other new girls in Italy. That is, the case of the former trafficked women who work in the prostitution business with the clear intent of earning enough money to recruit new girls in the trade³².

2.2 The Methodology for a Sensitive Research Topic

Sensitive research refers to the study of secretive, stigmatized, or deviant human activity and behaviour involving vulnerable research subjects. All the THB issues and the related phenomena (e.g., sex work and forced labour) can be regarded without any doubt as sensitive research topics which deal with deviant behaviours involving one of the most vulnerable group: the trafficking persons.

As mentioned in the Introduction (Chapter I), the present paper aims to: challenge the current victim/perpetrator dichotomy approach on the study of human trafficking; detect the intermediate roles of Nigerian trafficking; identify those elements which encourage the mobility of the characters in the trafficking industry; identify the steps undertaken by trafficked women who move from a role to another one; provide empirical cases of people who experienced trafficking and held middle positions.

In order to achieve these goals, the author has used a triangulate different data-gathering technique (based on qualitative approaches) and diversified sources. This methodology has allowed the researcher to address the different cognitive levels of the issues under examination, ranging from the analysis of the available documentation to in-depth interviews/conversations focused on specific facets of the trafficking phenomenon (e.g.,

³² The independence of the Nigerian sex workers from their former traffickers is difficult to define. For

women's recruiting in THB, their exploitation in Italy and the way women exit from the trade), and an observation within a Nigerian community.

In this study the people researched - Nigerian women lured into the sex market in Italy - belong to a *hidden population* whose members are involved in a black market³³.

The prostitution is considered a crime in several countries, and in Italy abolitionist policies have been put into place since 1958³⁴. It means that prostitution itself is not regarded by the Italian legislator as a crime but the ancillary activities, such as operating a brothel and pimping, are illegal (Savona et al. 2003). Because Nigerian trafficked women are socially marginalized and work in a hidden sector, their population size and exact characteristics remain unknown. This means that is not possible to define a sampling frame (Di Nicola 2009).

On account of these issues, particular methodological approaches, such as the *snow-ball sampling*, have been privileged in this study. This type of approach is based on seeking a first contact with a member of the hidden population who, at a later stage, becomes the *access key* to meet other individuals belonging to the population.

In order to approach the researched people, the locations/associations/institutes that Nigerian women attend during, and after, one of the trafficking phases in Italy must be acknowledged. Furthermore, all those individuals who usually come across trafficked people must be considered as possible informants:

- Rings roads and peripheral streets: black and African prostitutes³⁵
- Nigerian communities and their social networks in Italy including the African Churches: Nigerian migrants in Italy;
- Social *shelters* and day-care centers: social workers assisting victims and the trafficking victims;

this reason, the figure of the sex worker is also included under the voice "subject to coercion".

³³ The first step to conduct an explanatory study (and especially an ethnographic research) is the identification of locations or places where the researcher has higher chances to observe and meet the researched subjects.

³⁴ According the reports on prostitution provided by non Profit organizations, the black prostitutes usually works in the most town peripheral roads and suburbs (Giarretta 2009; Prina 2003).

³⁵ Prostitution is regulated by the Merlin Law (adopted in 1958). This law abolished the brothels and defined as a new offence the exploitation of prostitution (article 3.8).

- Non-governmental organizations with "Street Units" providing counseling services for street sex workers: social service providers, prostitutes and trafficked women;
- Internet web sites/blogs: clients of prostitutes and ex-clients;
- Police Offices/ Public Prosecutor Offices: public prosecutors and individuals convicted to offences referred to articles 600-601-602 Italian penal code;
- International and UN organizations working on migration matters / Italian Research Centers on Migration / International networks of research: scholars and researchers who have gathered case studies or life stories of trafficked persons).

2.2.1 Triangulate Different Data-gathering Technique: Observation, Interview and Content analysis

In order to overcome the difficulties tied to the study of the hidden population of Nigerian trafficked women (for which it is impossible to establish a sample frame) three qualitative techniques have been combined: *(I)* observation; *(II)* interview; *(III)* content analysis. This system guarantees a comparison of the results achieved by each technique³⁶.

As Mays and Pope (1994) states observational methods used in social science involve the systematic, detailed observation of behaviours and talks of a social group or individuals in their natural settings (182): this technique therefore allows researchers to observe what people do in “real life” contexts, and not what they say they do.

Because observational research does interfere as less as possible in the activities of the people being studied (Alder & Alder, 2000), it is usually applied to investigate sensitive issues, and especially when: 1. there are little or no information on a distinctive phenomenon (e.g., a new political movement or a unexpected social occurrence); 2. there is a large gap between the viewpoint of people outside a social group and the individuals who populate that social group (e.g., ethnic groups); 3. the phenomenon is

³⁶ For information on different academic approaches related to triangulate data-gathering techniques, see: Cardano, 2012.

difficult to be observed because it deals with some *hot* topic, such as deviant criminal groups.

Even though the observational methods guarantee to watch and record what people do and say in their natural settings, researchers observing actions usually stimulate modifications in behaviour or actions, or encourage introspection or self-questioning among those being researched: this is known as *Hawthorne effect* (Mays and Pope 1994: 182).

The author came to the use of observational methods only after having tried to perform *face to face* interviews with two Nigerian women who experienced trafficking (June 2012, Milan, see Table 2.3). For the poor results the author gained in the two interviews, she found that interviewing was not the most suitable technique because of some characteristics related to the individuals under study:

- 1) The *language*: Nigerian women usually did not speak Italian or official English (while the researcher did not speak African languages or *pidgin* English³⁷);
- 2) The *lack of trust*: these women did not trust new people (although the author was introduced to them by their acquaintances);
- 3) The *trafficked women trauma*: women were scared to speak about madams and pimps.

As the in-depth conversations with the two Nigerian women have revealed, in conducting ethnographic sensitive research with vulnerable individuals the interactions between the researcher and those researched are extremely fragile and subject to break downs.

In this case, the failure of the author to interviewing Nigerian women allowed her to make two interesting hypothesis: (1) the researched subjects needed to be approached by unobtrusive methods; (2) the trafficked women knew some psychological troubles when they spoke about their experience in the sex industry.

While the first observation refers to the methodological approach of this study, the second point concerns a characteristic of the researched people, and it needs a further analysis.

³⁷ The most popular language among Nigerians..

The trauma of many trafficked women, and their general unwillingness to remind the slavery-like conditions they experienced, is reported by a number of social service providers working for victims' assistance (TAMPEP 2009; Bonetti and Pozzi 2012; Giaretta 2009). According to these latter, in fact, Nigerian women forced into prostitution live in a permanent state of fear, that is due both to their harsh living conditions and violence perpetrated by the traffickers: i.e., the fear of a revenge of their pimps against their parents; the daily fear to meet violent clients; the fear to meet law enforcement officers and of being repatriate in the native country, with the shame of having failed the project of migration (Bonetti and Pozzi 2012; Giaretta 2009).

On the basis of these findings, the author decided to access Nigerian women in social and cultural settings where they could feel comfortable and self-confident, and where they did not perceive to be regarded as trafficked women by an Italian external observer (as it happened when they were directly questioned).

Attempting to minimise the mentioned Hawthorne effect, the author adopted an "observer role" that allowed her to participate in the activities of the researched subjects' natural settings, while observing them.

Based on the research question of this study, the author found Nigerian communities in Italy as best natural settings to perform an observation on THB phenomenon. These ethnic microcosms indeed are mostly populated by female migrants who are often involved in the trafficking of women in different ways and levels (although not all the members take part in the business).

The author performed her observation in a Nigerian community of Palermo for three main practical reasons:

1. The author's *key access contact* (Mr Vivian Wiwoloku) belonged to that Nigerian Community. The key contact granted the author a "safe" position to perform her observation on women involved in the THB offence³⁸;
2. Several informants³⁹ had previously reported to the author that Nigerian community in Palermo was populated both by migrants prostituting themselves

³⁸ The inner dynamics of Nigerian ethnic communities are usually unstable and an exposed action by an external observer can become a risky activity for the researcher.

³⁹ Interviews number 14, 19 and 20.

and entrepreneurs of the business of trafficking (such as pimps, madams and controllers): Therefore, it represented an ideal natural setting to watch relationships between victims and offenders.

3. The community was experiencing a period of inner troubles and conflicts characterized by violent attacks against Nigerian sex workers, that remained basically unexplained.

The first access key contact in Nigerian Community was Mr Vivian Wiwoloku, a Nigerian priest belonging to the Waldesian Church. He was at the head of a non profit organisation, named Pellegrino della Terra Onlus, that was founded with the purpose to assist Nigerian women brought to Italy and lured into trafficking.

After a talk with Mr Wiwoloku during which the author explained her role as observer, she was introduced in the Community by taking the role of Italian teacher for a group of Nigerian women.

In order to avoid any change in behaviours or actions of the observed subjects, the author did not reveal her research purpose and research identity to the staff of the Association and to her students. During the first lesson, the researcher introduced herself as the new Italian teacher: the positive effect of such a strategy was that Nigerian women quickly accepted the researcher, giving her a certain level of closeness and trust. By covering that role, the researcher was able to reach Nigerian female migrants in Italy by moderately or peripherally participating in their activities as a *detached insider*.

In spite of these positive effects, the role of the teacher partly limited the research activities: it did not allow the researcher to directly ask women about important arguments related to the research question. This problem was partially overcome planning some lessons on topics that could potentially reveal information on women's past story. For instance, based on the language sessions of the textbook, the researcher asked her Nigerian students to write short texts on their daily life and their staying and arrival in Italy: women's answers represented for the author an interesting *backtalk*⁴⁰ (for example, the author received some information on the year of women's arrival in Italy and the towns they came from).

⁴⁰ The term "backtalk" refers to all the observations and comments of the subjects studied that the researcher collects during the observation period.

For clear privacy reasons, the lessons was not taped by any recording system. After the ending of each lesson, the author wrote field notes regarding the way how women behaved and answered when some sensitive topics were touched in language sessions.

At the end of the period of observation, the author interviewed Mr Wiwoloku. This allowed the author to compare hypothesis on the phenomenon she developed during the period of observation (we spoke about the *social status* of the trafficked women inside Nigerian Community in Palermo, the female career in the hierarchy of criminal groups and the common usage of the magic among African people).

Other two in-depth interviews with some Italian social workers who collaborated with the Pellegrino della Terra Association were included in the observation field.

In conclusion, the observation of a Nigerian Community enabled the researcher to:

- access to a group of women who are experiencing, or experienced in the past, trafficking and street prostitution;
- observe Nigerian women's daily life in Italy and the way how they come to terms with the local social and cultural context.

While the observation aimed to uncover the world of Nigerian women in Italy with first-hand exploration of naturalistic settings, interviewing technique was used to acknowledge striking elements of Nigerian THB by attending to personal perspectives and interpretations of the interviewees.

The interviewing was applied by the researcher to collect data from the following typology of informants: (1) social service providers working in combating THB; (2) officers of governmental and public institutes; (3) scholars and officers of international organizations or University research centers.

In this study, in-depth and unstructured interviews were generally preferred because of their flexibility (that suits perfectly in an explanatory research as this one). This qualitative method is used to investigate issues that are potentially embarrassing for the respondents because deals with intense and personal nature events that may have negative implications for the respondents if revealed (Schuetze, 1977 and 1983; Hermanns, 1991, 183; Muehlefeld et.al., 1981).

Moreover, the in-depth and unstructured interview avoids, or limits, the usage of the typical question/response schema in favour of a more narrative schema where the interviewee is encouraged to use her own spontaneous language in the narration of events. In this way, the perspective of the interviewee is best revealed in the story (Bauer, 1996).

As previously mentioned, only in few cases interviewing was used to approach Nigerian women who experienced trafficking. In one of these cases, it was deliberately chosen by the author because the woman showed to be very confident with the Italian language and had no apprehension to report about her life.

The interviewing technique was changed according to the interviewees' profile:

1. *Unstructured and in-depth interview*: the researcher preferred this type of interviewing when she approached Nigerian women. In such a case, the author wanted to guarantee to their interviewees to freely tell their own story with no or little interferences in the talk from her. The researcher observed, indeed, that very informal conversations helped the women in being self-confident during the interview.

Generally, they showed not to like any recording system: when the recorder was switched off, they spoke in a more friendly way, adding some personal data on their family and their native country.

2. *Semi-structured interview format*. The author used this interviewing technique to speak with social workers, officers of governmental or international associations (in Annex III an example of semi-structured interview format is provided).

According to the goals of this research, the following institutes, non profit associations and governmental agencies, located throughout Italian territory, were identified and contacted for interviewing:

- **Northern Italy: Genoa/Turin** (Liguria and Piedmont): La casa di Isoke; Maschile Plurale; **Milan** (Lombardy): Cooperativa lotta contro l'emarginazione; Caritas Ambrosiana; **Turin** (Piedmont): Associazione Abele/Libera; Freedom Legality and Right in Europe.

- **Central Italy: Rome** (Lazio): Bee free - C.I.E. Ponte Galeria; International Organisation for Migration (IOM) - Trafficking Focal Point; Parsec – Prof. Francesco Carchedi; Direzione Nazionale Antimafia – procuratore Giusto Sciacchitano; Caritas Roma – Ufficio Immigrazione; **L’Aquila** (Abruzzo), Procura della Repubblica - procuratore David Mancini.
- **Southern Italy: Palermo** (Sicily): Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud; Nigerian Embassy in Sicilia, Waldensian Church; Buon Pastore Onlus; Progetto Maddalena Caritas Palermo; IOM Lampedusa; Coordinamento Antitratta Favour and Loveth; Università di Palermo – prof. Sergio Cipolla.

The Table 2.3 reports the main references of the 25 interviews performed by the author, i.e.: the interview number, the role of the interviewee and the organisation where he or she worked, and the date and place where the interviews were performed. In the paper, each interview will be referred through the number reported below:

<i>Interview number</i>	<i>Role of the interviewee</i>	<i>Office or Organisation</i>	<i>Date and place of the interview</i>
No. 1	Social service provider	Associazione Abele NGO – street unit ⁴¹	October 19, 2010 Turin
No. 2	Anti-Mafia Prosecutor	National Anti-Mafia Prosecutor’s Office (DNA)	June 1, 2011 Rome
No. 3	Social service provider	- Project Consultant at Caritas - General Manager in Nigeria at Metal Construction (from 1970 to 1977)	June 20, 2011 Interview by phone
No. 4	Advocacy and Project Officer	- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Geneva - Counter-Trafficking Focal Point IOM Rome	January 12, 2012 Rome
No. 5	Sociologist	Counter-Trafficking Focal Point IOM Rome	January 12, 2012 Rome

⁴¹ Street unit refers to a social service specialised in first assistance of street prostitutes.

No. 6	Albanian social service provider	Counter-Trafficking Office at Caritas Tirana	May 2, 2012 Milan
No. 7	Social service provider	Cooperativa lotta contro l'emarginazione sociale - NGO	June 26, 2012 Milan
No. 8	Social service provider	Cooperativa lotta contro l'emarginazione sociale - NGO	June 26, 2012 Milan
No. 9 ⁴²	Ukrainian woman who experienced an episode of sex assault		July 1, 2012 Milan
No. 10	Bolivian man who experienced like-slavery conditions and forced labour		July 1, 2012 Milan
No. 11	Nigerian woman who was trafficked and exploited in the street		July 1, 2012 Milan
No. 12	Nigerian woman who was trafficked and exploited in the street		July 2, 2012 Milan
No. 13	Ex victim of trafficking and social service provider	La Casa di Isoke ⁴³	December 16, 2012 Genoa
No. 14	Head of CISS NGO	Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud - CISS NGO	February 1, 2013 Palermo
No. 15	Coordinator of Migration and Development Unit	IOM Rome	February 22, 2013 Rome
No. 16	Legal expert who identify vulnerable people in CDA ⁴⁴	Praesidium Project ⁴⁵ in Lampedusa for IOM Italy	February 22, 2013 Rome
No. 17	Social service	- BeeFree ONG	February 19, 2013

⁴² The interviews from no.9 to no.12 were performed in the Offices of Cooperativa lotta contro l'emarginazione sociale.

⁴³ La Casa d'Isoke is a Care Centre for Nigerian trafficked women in Turin.

⁴⁴ The CDA acronym stands for Centri d'Accoglienza (reception centres). They provide very basic aid for immigrants who irregularly cross the Italian border.

⁴⁵ Praesidium project focuses on consolidating reception capacities with respect to migration flows, reaching the island of Lampedusa and other strategic border points on the Sicilian coasts.

	provider who identify vulnerable people in CIE ⁴⁶	- Centre of Identification and Expulsion of illegal migrants (Ponte Galera CIE)	Rome
No. 18	Professor of Sociology and consultant for UNICRI, IOM, UNODC	PARSEC Consortium University of Rome "La Sapienza"	February 20, 2013 Rome
No. 19	Social service provider	- <i>Loveth and Favour</i> Counter trafficking Unit - Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud - CISS NGO Bari	March 7, 2013 Palermo
No. 20	Social service provider	Cooperazione Internazionale Sud Sud - CISS NGO Palermo	March 7, 2013 Palermo
No. 21	- Catholic sister who lived in Nigeria for 10 years - Social service provider	- Caritas – street unit in Palermo - <i>Loveth and Favour</i> Counter trafficking Unit	March 27, 2013 Palermo
No. 22	Social service provider	Caritas - Immigration Office in Italy	April 15, 2013, Rome
No. 23	Public Prosecutor	District Anti-Mafia Prosecutor's Office (DIA)	May 9, 2013, L'Aquila
No. 24	- Nigerian priest - Founder of Pellegino della Terra NGO	- Nigerian Community - Pellegrino della Terra NGO - Waldesian Church	May 15, 2013 Palermo
No. 25	Italian journalist who live in Abuja (Nigeria)	Correspondent ISMU from Nigeria	May 20, 2013 Interview by phone

Table 2.3 – table of reference

Finally, the analysis of the existing data and archives was used to gather further data: this method enabled the researcher to be aware of the amount of data on this phenomenon was available.

⁴⁶ CIE means Centre of Identification and Expulsion of illegal migrants. As envisaged by the state structure, the foreigners found in Italy in a state of irregularity are identified and repatriated to their countries of origin.

For the purposes of this paper, indeed, unobtrusive measures are needed to find quantitative data or figures on trafficking in humans. These typology of data was collected through large scale and comparative research by: EUROSTAT: annual report on Trafficking in Human Beings; IOM, data-base on the trafficked persons repatriated; UNODOC, human trafficking case law database; UNICRI, comparative research; the US Department of State, which publishes annually Trafficking in Persons (TIP); the NAPTP reports on victims and offenders. In the Italian panorama some archival records are made available by: The Department for Equal Opportunities and its National Observatory on Trafficking; the National Antimafia Unit; the Home Office; the National Office Against Racial Discrimination; the Department of Public Security; the Italian National Institute of Statistics.

Since the slavery question in Italy, and its related issues, was the object of a number journalistic investigations, the author performed a content analysis of the following newspaper and magazines: Corriere Immigrazione; LaRepubblica; Terre di Mezzo; People and Power – Aljazeera.

Finally, it must be reported that the main organizations in the civil society working against trafficking in humans often use informal channel of communication such as internet blogs, facebook groups or pages and web sites. In order not to miss the information of such sources, the author viewed periodically the following internet sites:

- Coordinamento Favour and Loveth and Spazio Mondo Migranti's facebook groups;
- <https://www.facebook.com/claudio.magnabosco.1?fref=ts>;
- <http://maschileplurale.it/cms/> ;
- <http://piamonlus.blogspot.it/>;
- <http://www.inafrica.it/benincity/fondi.html>;
- <http://www.ynaija.com/>;
- <http://stranieromavero.blogspot.it/>;
- <http://www.amicidilazzaro.it/>.

2.3 Considerations

The anthropological methodology used for the research topic has made this contribution a unique and unrepeatable field work on THB phenomenon, for the following main elements:

- 1) The *subjectivity* of the researcher: the personal characteristics of the researcher conditioned the relationships with people researched, and shaped field social interactions in unexpected ways. In this regard, three main characteristics of the researcher determined relevant outcomes: gender, race and age. Firstly, as a female researcher participating in women's activities, the researcher had easy access to female natural setting as she was not perceived as threatening to them. Secondly, the researcher different racial and cultural background was a disadvantageous in fieldwork because Nigerian women often perceive Italians as an external and unknown group. Thirdly, the age of the researcher played positively in the researcher's social interactions with the observed women; as those persons were among 20 and 30 years old, they looked the researcher as a peer who could understand or share some of their main interests and daily problems (from evening entertainments to caring of children).
3. *Not standardization* of the research process: the research path used by the author is not replicable as it refers to a specific time, place and a distinctive group of individuals. This entails that the present fieldwork study can not longer be done in the same way as the researcher did it.

Although the qualitative methodology applied in this study ensured real and natural settings in data gathering, the author experienced some typical problems of the anthropological studies:

- 1) *A time-consuming activity*. Approaching trafficked women and watching their behaviours in natural setting was a time-consuming activity. The biggest problem was to find a first contact to access the researched people. In a first time, the author tried to achieve the key contact asking to Italian social service providers working against THB. For clear privacy and security reasons, however, little or no personal data on victims were released by social workers to external observers (as the researcher was): the researcher tried two times to

approach Nigerian women living inside social shelters but she was not able to speak with them. After that first failure, the researcher tried not to limit her research to the category of “trafficking victims” and she enlarged it to the more general group of “Nigerian women involved in the sex market”. Looking for that group of people, the researcher had basically two chances to reach them: (a) directly in their working place (the street) or (b) in those places/locations that women attended when they did not prostitute themselves. Because the first option could place the researcher in risky natural settings (with little chance to be practically performed) it was rejected in favour of the second option that guaranteed the author no too exposed position in fieldwork. When the researcher realized that the most of Nigerian women belonged to an ethnic community or to an African Church, she tried to take an access contact in one of these social groups. After the researcher met priest Wiwoloku, she spent her time to win women’s trust.

- 2) *Limited number of cases.* Due to the issues mentioned in the previous point, the total number of approached people was quite limited. This means that the results of this research can not be representative for the entire population of Nigerian trafficked women. Regarding this limit, it needs to be recalled that the aim of this study is not to write a new generalizing theory on THB but is to highlight intermediate roles and grey areas between the two opposing figures of victim and offender. Pursuing this goal, the representativeness of the collected cases is more relevant than the final cases’ amount.
- 3) *Ethical Dilemma:* Because in anthropological studies researchers directly deal with life of people, their research’s activities determine several ethical concerns that are tied to the people’s security and privacy rights. When using anthropological approaches, researchers must be aware that the gathered data must not be published when it puts into risky conditions the individuals. Supporting such view some scholars state that on the researchers’ duty is to tailoring their data collection methods to both the sensitivity of the research topic and the vulnerability of social groups and individuals (Hobbs 2002; Lee 1993).

Because the author has already conducted a fieldwork study on the trafficking victims in Albania, she was aware about the vulnerability of that social group. Thanks to that first contact with women who had experienced trafficking, the researcher understood the importance to approach those women by moderately or peripherally participating in their activities. Thanks to the role of detached insider (i.e., the role of the teacher), the author did not experience serious ethical problems. When writing the reports on the observation performed during the learning sessions, the researcher spoke about the group in a general way without making any reference to a particular individual and, obviously, avoiding to use their true names.

Although the reported negative effects or concerns must be taken into account when looking the results of this study, the researcher continue to believe that anthropological techniques have represented the only research path to approach trafficking people's group. As a part of current literature on qualitative methodologies for sensitive research topics claim researchers must assume social roles that fit into the worlds they are studying, especially when the research subjects concern criminality and deviant groups (Alder and Alder 1987: 8).

CHAPTER III

Background to the Study: National Regulations and Social Context

By acknowledging cultural contexts and legislative frameworks of the two Nations involved in the phenomenon, the reader can fully understand the meaning of the trafficked women's eyewitness accounts: women's story indeed refer to rituals, living conditions and fears that are indissolubly tied to life contexts of the origin country and the destination country. The characters involved in the offence base their behaviour on values and customs that are rooted in their native culture. At the same time, the migration process ask these people to come to terms with the new cultural models of the trafficking destination country. The analysis of the cultural gap that Nigerian women live when brought in Italy help us to understand the main issues they face on daily basis, and the reasons why these women suffer of social marginalization. In order to better understand this point, it is important to acknowledge the way how Italy provides state protection and social assistance to trafficking victims, and what measures it takes in combating trafficking offenders. Attempting to describe the trafficking phenomenon in its different stages, an overview on actions of Nigerian law enforcement agencies aims at highlighting whether, or not, this country takes effective measures to limit international THB.

Attempting to provide the reader with the necessary background to the THB study, references on Italian and Nigerian anti-trafficking law and measures are debated in first two paragraphs, whereas genders issues and traditional rituals of Nigerian society are explained in last two paragraphs.

3.1 The Italian Anti-trafficking Law and Measures for Victims Protection

The UN Trafficking Protocol (Chapter I, *paragraph 1.1.3*) provides a definition of trafficking in persons offence on a broad international level. In accordance with international law, in 2003, Italy adopted Law no. 228 which reformed the content of articles dealing with slavery, slavery-like practices and trafficking in persons offences

(referred to articles 600, 601 and 602 criminal code): the new law specified the core elements occurring in the offences and generally increased the penalties for trafficking offenders. Furthermore, it paid specific attention to the possible associative aspects of those crimes and some repressive and investigative measures (generally applied in Mafia-type association crimes) were introduced to combat trafficking.

Article 600 of the criminal code, titled “reducing to or keeping in slavery or servitude”, gives a clear definition of the offence and provides a detailed description of its key elements. As reads, reduction to, or keeping in, slavery and servitude occurs when

“Whoever exercises on another person powers equivalent to property rights or who reduces to or keeps another person in a position of persistent subjugation, forcing him/her to work or furnish sexual services or to beg, or any whatever type of activity that implies his/her exploitation, shall be punished with imprisonment for a period between eight or twenty years” (Article 600 c.d.).

Through this provision, the Italian legislator distinguishes between “slavery” and “servitude”. The state of servitude referees to the particular condition when physical or psychological subjugation does not cover necessarily all the life of the person but actually produces a situation of exploitation. By including the state of servitude in the provision, the Italian legislator attempts to include in the offence each possible form of exploitation⁴⁷.

Article 601 deals directly with the offence of trafficking in persons, especially by punishing the following three types of conduct: (1) the trafficking of persons who are in the situation described in article 600, (2) the inducement by deception to enter, stay within, or exit from the national territory, or to move within it, with the purpose of reducing or keeping another person in slavery or servitude, (3) forcing a person by means of violence, threat, deceit, abuse of authority, or by profiting from a situation of physical or psychological inferiority or a situation of necessity to enter, stay within, or exit from the national territory, or to move within it, for the purpose enounced by the previous article (TRANSCRIME, 2003). This provision attempts to contain each

⁴⁷ By referring directly to servitude the legislature has included this specific form of subjugation in the provision. In addition, it contains some forms of exploitation (such as forced begging or prostitution), but the list is intentionally left open for difficulties to foresee in advance what other forms of exploitation may evolve in the future (Transcrime, 2003: 88).

conduct of “commercialization” of the victims: indeed, it punishes the entrance, the staying and the transferring of persons within or from the Italian territory⁴⁸.

Finally, article 602 relating the “acquisition and disposition of slaves” includes all those cases which may not fall within the scope of article 601 by enlarging the culpability to “whoever buys or alienates or gives a person in one of those situations described in article 600”.

Looking at the judgements of Italian courts for trafficking in persons and slavery-like practices’ offences, the charge of trafficking in persons is often read together to offences listed in: (a) article 416 *bis* c.d. on “Mafia-type association” and (b) article 12 Consolidated Text on “provisions against illegal immigration”. Indeed, as recent judgements of the courts have brought to light, Nigerian trafficking is controlled by criminal networks which have some typical features of Mafia-type associations⁴⁹. The coordination of all the investigations related the crimes of trafficking and slavery-like practices refers to the Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (DNA), which operates under the Ministry of Justice and through its district agencies.

Concerning the investigate activities, according to the U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report (2012), in 2010 the Italian State investigated 2,333 suspected trafficking offenders, it brought to trial 621 trafficking offenders and convicted 174 trafficking offenders (196).

Together with the repression of crimes related to trafficking in humans, the above-mentioned Law no. 228/03 established relevant measures for victims assistance⁵⁰: Indeed, new tools for adequate protection and aid for people who have experienced trafficking, and the consequent exploitation, were introduced; Article 18 Consolidated

⁴⁸ Considering the main elements which compose the offence of trafficking in persons (to induce an illegal migrant to enter into borders of national territory) obviously this other charge can easily constitute a case of concurrence with the offence mentioned in article 12, "provisions against illegal immigration".

⁴⁹ To deal with cases such these, Law no. 228/03 has enlarged the range of instruments available to the agencies investing trafficking in persons and related crimes (it allowed them to use some typical techniques for investigation into organized crime, such as interceptions and undercover activities (article 9 law no. 288/03 enlarges the discipline of the law no. 203/91 to all those offences referred to articles 600-604).

⁵⁰ Through articles no. 12-13 of the above mentioned law, the legislature constituted a fund "for anti-trafficking measures which aims at supporting those people who find themselves exploited by criminal groups or have been trafficked. In the Fund "for the anti-trafficking measures" two different funds converge: 1) the sums assigned under article 18 Consolidated Text in favour of foreign citizens victims of violence or of exploitation, who are in danger for having attempted to escape from their perpetrators; 2) the proceeds of confiscations arising from judgments of conviction for offenses listed in articles 600,601,602 criminal code.

Text guarantees assistance to foreigners who are victims of trafficking. It declares in clear terms that Italian authorities must protect any foreign citizen if situations of violence or serious exploitation against him/her are found, “and his safety is seriously threatened, as a result of attempting to escape from the control of a criminal organisation” (Art. 18.1). With the main goal to protect the victim, this provision introduces a renewable six-month permit for foreign citizens found to be victims of trafficking. The permit is given to those victims who participate in support or reintegration programmes (denouncing their own persecutors is not compulsory).

Reading article 18, it is clear that Italian legislator regarded the assistance as a fundamental tool for a “equal standing of victims with the state’s concern to punish perpetrators of serious criminal offences” (TRANSCRIME, 2003).

While from 2000 to 2006 the number of trafficked victims assisted by the Italian government was growing (at an average of 16.4 percent), according to several sources, starting from 2007 the residence permit (referred to in article 18) had a relevant reduction.

Table No. 3								
Nationality and number of young victims of trafficking following social protection programmes (2000 – 2007, Call for proposals No. 1 - 7)								
Geographical areas and countries	Call No. 1	Call No. 2	Call No. 3	Call No. 4	Call No. 5	Call No. 6	Call No. 7	Total
	(2000 - 2001)	(2001- 2002)	(2002- 2003)	(2004- 2005)	(2004- 2002)	(2005- 2006)	(2006- 2007)	
	a.v.	a.v.	a.v.	a.v.	a.v.	a.v.	a.v.	a.v.
Africa, of which:	13	15	12	30	44	76	33	223
Nigeria	(13)	(13)	(7)	(23)	(31)	(53)	25	165
Other countries	-	(2)	(5)	(7)	13	(23)	8	(58)
East Europe, of which:	66	65	55	79	89	187	152	693
Albania	(34)	(29)	(9)	(8)	(2)	(12)	(5)	(99)
Romania	(15)	(25)	(32)	(63)	(80)	(161)	(145)	(521)
Other countries	(17)	(11)	(14)	(8)	(7)	(14)	(2)	(73)
Russia	-	1	-	-			5	6
South America	-	-	3	-		-	4	7
Other countries	8*	-	-	9	6	3	4	30
Total	87	81	70	118	139	266	198	959
% of Nigerian minors on total of minors	15.00	16.00	10.00	19.50	22.30	19.90	12.60	Average for Period 16.4

Source: Elaboration by PARSEC based on data of the Department for Equal Opportunities; * 2 are Italian nationals

However, in 2011, according to the US TIP Report (2012), the Italian government identified and referred for care 724 new trafficking victims and it continued to provide comprehensive assistance to 836 victims referred in previous years (197)⁵¹.

3.2 Nigerian National Strategies on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings

According to the US Department of State’s Trafficking in Persons Report (2012), “the Government of Nigeria does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but is making significant effort to do so” (270)⁵². In the last two years the government has not demonstrated sufficient progress in its anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, coming back among those countries that do not meet minimum standards of combating trade in humans (ranked tier 2)⁵³.

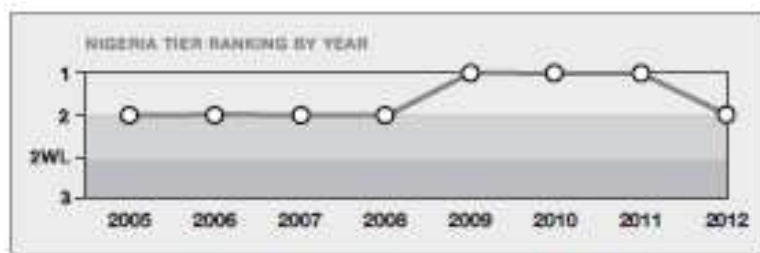


Table 3.2

In 2000, accepting the challenges to enforce measures to combat trafficking in human beings, Nigeria signed the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking Protocol, which was internally domesticated by the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administrative Act (2003).

This act established an agency, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other related matters (NAPTIP), which was charged with a set of duties: (a) to coordinate and enforce all existing laws on trafficking in persons and other related offences, (b) to strengthen the effective legal means for international cooperation in

⁵¹ The data produced by governmental sources such as the Department of Equal Opportunities stop in 2008.

⁵² In last decade Nigeria has made some efforts to improve the law enforcement on combating and preventing trafficking in human beings: indeed, while in 2001 Nigeria was classified by the Trafficking in Persons Reports (TIP) of U.S. Department of State as a tier 2, the TIP Report dated 2010 included Nigeria among tier 1 states (see Table 1.1).

⁵³ The rank tier 2 is for those states that did not meet minimum standards of combating human trafficking. It refers to minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking found in section 8 of the Trafficking Victims Protections Act (U.S. Law on Trafficking in Persons).

criminal matters for suppressing the international activities of trafficking in persons, and (c) to supervise, control and coordinate the rehabilitation of trafficked persons and participating in proceedings relating to traffic in persons⁵⁴.

Basically, NAPTIP get a dual role: it is both the state body charged to combat trafficking and the governmental organisation committed to improving assistance for victims.

Regarding the efforts of Nigerian government in prosecuting perpetrators of trafficking, in 2009 NAPTIP reported 149 investigations, 26 prosecutions and 26 convictions for trafficking offences. As the data show, in recent years the number of convictions has increased significantly, from 1 in 2004 to 42 in 2011, corresponding to nearly a third of total cases during the reported period (Table 1.2). Reading the table, it can be easily observed that the majority of convictions are in Benin City (the town most affected by the trafficking phenomenon).

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	TOTAL
Abuja	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	1	5
Lagos	-	2	1	1	3	5	1	4	17
Kano	-	2	-	-	7	3	13	9	34
Uyo	-	-	1	-	1	2	1		5
Benin	1	-	1	4	1	3	7	17	34
Sokoto	-	-	-	-	11	10	4	7	33
Emugu	-	-	1	2	2	-	2		7
Maidug ri	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	5
Total	1	4	4	7	25	26	30	42	139

Table 3.2 Summary of convictions 2004 – December 2011
<http://www.naptip.gov.ng/databaseanalysis.html>

⁵⁴Okojie, p. 166.

In spite of these successes, Nigerian courts tend not to properly punish the offenders of trafficking and slavery-like practices even when they are clearly found guilty of these crimes. In recent years, “roughly a third of convicted traffickers received fines in lieu of prison time, and despite identifying 386 labour trafficking victims, the government prosecuted only two forced labour cases” (US Department of State, 2012: 270).

Concerning the improvements in victim protection, in compliance with its commitments of assistance, NAPTIP has established eight new shelters (in Abuja, Lagos, Kano, Benin City, Enugu, Sokoto, and Uyo), providing for: food, clothing, counselling, medical treatment and vocational training⁵⁵. Recent data published on the NAPTIP official web site shows the number of victims who came into contact with the shelter system. The table below shows the number of the individuals hosted in shelters according the gender and the age

YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	1-17 YRS	18-27 YRS	28 YRS AND ABOVE
JAN-DEC. 2004	73	15	58	38	29	6
JAN-DEC. 2005	341	61	280	191	125	25
JAN-DEC. 2006	363	40	323	178	180	5
JAN-DEC. 2007	1004	330	674	462	498	44
JAN-DEC. 2008	1269	333	936	628	562	79
JAN-DEC. 2009	1250	419	831	540	573	137
JAN-DEC. 2010	1047	220	827	540	467	40
JAN-AUG. 2011	328	97	231	225	96	7
GRAND TOTAL	5675	1515	4160	2802	2530	343

Table 3.3: details of victims rescued between 2004 -2011
<http://www.naptip.gov.ng/databaseanalysis.html>

⁵⁵ The shelter system runs in strict cooperation with other stakeholders (such as domestic NGOs) which usually take the form of provisional rehabilitation centres providing skills training and micro-credit assistance for victims (in order to give them some chance at economic independence).

As it is possible to observe in the table 3.3 the majority of the hosted people are young females. About their age, it is important to highlight the high percentage of minors: In 2011 minors were almost a third of the total and in the previous year nearly one half (44.6 percent).

Finally, NAPTIP has got also the important role of strengthening international cooperation in criminal matters for suppressing the international trafficking in persons (as stated in Section 4 of the act). Pursuing this objective, NAPTIP encouraged bilateral agreements with states of destination of Nigerian victims of trafficking, mainly with Italy, which was recognised as one of the main European destination countries.

The cooperation between these two countries started in 1999, when the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Italy requested administrative assistance from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in two main fields: (1) the development of a plan of action for Nigeria to combat trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation and (2) the enhancement of consultation among the law enforcement agencies of the two nations. In 2000, the two states signed a bilateral agreement to combat clandestine immigration which included the commitment to respect human rights in the repatriation policies of illegal migrants. All these agreements had the main purposes of developing an integrated approach between Nigeria and Italy in fighting the human trafficking business and of contributing to the formulation and implementation of effective policies against that international crime.

3.3 The Social Context

The elements that are characteristic of the socio-cultural context must be considered when explaining the Nigerian trafficking of women. After a brief historical *excursus* on the Nigeria Republic, in next two paragraphs the women's position in the Nigerian society and the voodoo rites are analyzed in concurrence with the trafficking issue. Several sources indicate that such elements contribute in different ways to ensure that more vulnerable women are lured into the trafficking process (DNA 2010, 2012; UNICRI/UNODC 2003).

A British protectorate since 1901, Nigeria became an independent state in 1960 with the

adoption of a federal constitution. The building of the new Federal Republic of Nigeria was largely guided on the Western post-colonialism state model which marked states' borders not taking into account the vast variety of different peoples who lived in the territory. The Federal Republic of Nigeria comprised indeed 36 states and a Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) with over two hundred different ethnic groups, of which the three largest ones were the Hausa-Fulani (in the north, 29 percent), the Yoruba (in the southwest, 21 percent) and the Igbo (in the Niger Delta, 18 percent).

In the 1970s, the new state of Nigeria was strongly affected by the international crisis and the collapse of oil prices: the country was the fifth-largest oil producer worldwide and its balance sheet assets were based on the export of crude material (around 90 percent of its economy).

As a consequence of the crises and internal ethnic hatred, during the '60s and the '70s, Nigeria experienced a period of political unrest with several military coups and civil conflicts. The Biafra civil war (from 1967 to 1970) temporarily divided the state in two main parts: the Northwest against the Southeast. The latter was populated by a majority of Igbo people who claimed the independence from the rest of the country.

In front of the economic collapse, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank applied in Nigeria some structural adjustment programmes based on processes of liberalisation and privatisation (Aghatise, 2002). Such policies had the main effects of exacerbating the social costs of the crisis, making the country a free land for the colonisation of Western multinational oil companies. In 1966, new oil fields were found in the delta of the Niger River. The area knew a rapid process of industrialisation and modernisation driven by the investment of foreign companies such as the Italian company Eni.

According to some observers, that encounter between the Nigerian traditional society and Western globalised model determined serious social and cultural shifts and challenges: Carchedi and other commentators identified in the increasing presence of rich white men, with unlimited spending powers, one of the main causes of the local prostitution:

“The presence of an increasing number of white men in Nigeria has ensnared many girls. These men purchased or rented Nigerian women during the period of their stay in the country. Such a behaviour has spread the myth of easy wealth” (interview no. 13).

In this regard, the presence of a number of Italian businessmen in Nigeria is seen as one of first causes of the beginning of a migration flow from Nigeria to Italy: some Italian men married Nigerian women and took them to Italy. Here, these women became the first contact for new Nigerian migrants. Meanwhile, Italy became the most popular choice for University studies among young people belonging to the Nigerian upper class:

“Originally Nigerian migrants came to Italy only temporarily, to study and work. Most of them moved on from here [Sicily] to the North of Italy, looking for a work. Usually, Nigerians have only been able to find low skill jobs, such as domestic help. Some opened shops, or started import/export businesses (Interview no.24)

As matter of fact, in the 1980s Italy hosted the largest group of Nigerian students in Europe. According Carchedi and Wiwoloku, some of the members of this first Nigerian community never turned back to their native country and, after the political failure of Nigeria, ended up promoting criminal businesses through University brotherhoods (Bernardotti & Carchedi, 2007). As matter of facts, since the beginning of the 1990s, organized criminal networks have gained considerable power in West Africa. These networks, mainly of Nigerians, based their growth on established trade networks with the large West African populations in the United States and in parts of Europe (UNODC, 2002).

In addition to the reported cultural challenges, Nigerian cultural stress on the myth of Western wealth contributed to justifying in the eyes of the majority of Nigerians some illegal businesses that developed over all the country, such as the sexual exploitation of thousands of Nigerian women in internal and international trafficking (Carling, 2005; Lawal, 2011). The 1980s were marked by the beginning of trafficking in women and minors and the escalation of illegal migration out of the country. These phenomena were the clear result of a set of social circumstances due to the above-mentioned political and economic crises: (1) the poor living conditions in Nigeria caused by the economic and political crises (increasing poverty and persistent unemployment), (2) the high rate of internal violence due to the military coup and the war, and (3) the increased stringency

in immigration law of destination countries.

All these conditions increased the number of Nigerian citizens who searched for a better life out of their native country and led to the emergence of a illicit market for services that aid illegal or irregular migration, such as the provision of fake travelling documents, transportation, clandestine border crossings, temporary accommodation and job brokering (Aghatise, 2002; Germano, 2001).

Latouche has explained the main elements of this process with this words: “The survivors to the development produce and reproduce their lives outside the official and legal sectors, using some relational strategies” (Latouche, 2000: 164) where, according Latouche, the woman plays a fundamental role.

3.3.1. The Role of the Woman in the Trafficking Business

Based on cultural elements, some scholars have portrayed an image of Nigerian woman as a weak and submissive individual (Aghatise 2004; Adepoju 2005; Okojiie 2009). However, other observers have claimed that this image does not accurately reflect the female figure in Nigerian society (Beneduce 2003, Carchedi et al. 2007); the woman holds a more complex social role that makes her a leading actor in the trade industry.

The trafficking of Nigerian women and girls for sexual exploitation is generally considered a gender issue by international and non-governmental organizations (ACP Observatory on Migration 2010; Adepoju 2005). In that view, trafficking in women is encouraged by factors within Nigeria’s patriarchal society that marginalize and oppress women. In a typical Nigerian family hierarchy, indeed, the daughters hold an inferior position to the sons, and the daughters’ education and future are more easily sacrificed for the well-being of the other family members:

“I went to school up to 12 years. Then my father died and I started to work with my mother at home; from 15 to 16 years I worked both as a hairdresser and as a seller in the local market” (Interview no. 12).

The parents are usually reluctant to invest in their daughters because they will leave the native family after marriage (Okojiie 2009). This inferior position of female children makes them a more popular choice for participation in the traditional custom of foster

care (i.e., the children are sent to live with members of the extended family), which is used to conceal trafficking (Okojiie 2009; UNDOC/UNICRI 2003).

A first reading of the migration trends seems to confirm the structural oppression of women in Nigerian society. During the 1980s, one effect of the Nigerian economic crises and political unrest of the 1960s and 1970s was the migration of a large number of women, who were sent abroad to provide financial support for their families (ACP Observatory on Migration 2010). When the traffickers realized that sizeable profits could be earned by sending “exotic” women to the European sex market, Nigerian women were encouraged by their own husbands to leave their country to work in the lucrative prostitution business (Aghatise 2004; Becucci and Massari 2008).

This picture of a weak and submissive woman does not fully represent the female figure in the Nigerian society: it is interesting to note that women held important hierarchical positions both in the military and in religious spheres in the past. In the 1930s, some external observers described the Nigerian woman as an ambitious and proud individual demanding gender equality (Governor Lord Frederick in Beneduce, 2003). At that time, for instance, each Igbo community (the ethnic group currently most involved in trafficking) had a female council, called *Umuada* (earth daughters), which held enormous power in defending local law and customs. As stressed by some anthropologists, African women are still able to put into practice “some appropriate strategies of power, aimed at affirming their own projects and autonomy, fighting the marginalization of their existence” (Beneduce, 2003: 17). Indeed, in spite of the patriarchal structure of Nigerian community, women are the main subjects who guarantee family survival thanks to their work and spirit against adversity. A clear example of that female initiative can be found in the figure of the woman merchant: in addition to the roles of wife and mother, women are often responsible for selling in the market the products derived from the agricultural work of their husbands. Among the Yoruba, women are grouped in associations in order to collect resources, organise exchanges and grant small loans. The different associations sometimes are organised in regional networks so that the business is extended to other cities (Pilotto, 2009). This female participation in the market’s public space contrasts with woman’s traditional role and with the idea of female purity, that must be preserved by limiting the woman’s tasks within the domestic environment. Such exposure is often associated with the loss of

traditional customs and creates the belief of a corrupted modern woman: “These women's activities caused the indebtedness of husbands to their wives; neglecting the domestic and reproductive obligations to pursue profit, these women were represented as 'prostitutes’” (Apter, 1993: 117-118).

Concerning the trafficking business, only by acknowledging that strength and the entrepreneurship of modern Nigerian women is it possible to understand why the figure of the madam exists in Nigerian trafficking.

“The Nigerian woman has the ability for business ventures. She is not only a subdued individual. She takes the initiative. There are many women in the army and some of them are spiritual leaders. Women demonstrate a natural sense for business” (interview no.17).

“Nigerian woman is not subdued...well, she is...but she has also a strong business sense: for example, some women are leaders in the army” (interview no.16)

Unlike the trafficking managed by other nationalities, where female traffickers are subordinated to male accomplices, Nigerian trafficking is mostly a female business in which the madam plays a key role (Okojie 2003; DNA 2012, UNICRI 2010).

The madam represents a model of success to other Nigerian women because she is a female who has achieved a recognized social position of power and authority through her personal economic adventures. The emancipation gained by the madams is an important means to persuade new girls to trust the traffickers (Beneduce 2003; interview with Gisella Desiderato, Italian journalist in Abuja, conducted in Milan, June 29, 2011).

In the following transcript of a taped telephone conversation, a madam known as Aminat tells her success story to a young girl who had asked to be moved to Italy:

“Somebody helped me to arrive here [Italy], and I paid off the amount of money they [her traffickers] asked from me, 25 million lire. When I finished paying, I became a free woman, and I started to earn money for myself. Then, I invested my money in the business to bring other women here who then have to work on the streets (...). When you [the new girl] arrive here, you will do the same. It works like that in this business” (Ordinary Court of Naples, Court of Assizes, *Omofona Priscilla vs Italy*, 2010 41).

In another part of the same telephone conversation, Madam Aminat explains the job that the girl is expected to perform in clear terms:

“You know there are some women from Benin who brought their daughters here to work as prostitutes and in turn receive some money from their daughters. That’s how it works here...When you finish paying the agreed amount, after one or two years, you

can start to earn for yourself, and in a few years, you will be rich, and if you want to invest your money by bringing some people here to work, you could request from them an amount of money, and you will be richer” (Ordinary Court of Naples, Court of Assizes, *Omofona Priscilla vs Italy*, 2010: 42).

In the light of this anecdotal evidence, it is possible to understand why at the end of the exploitative phase certain Nigerian trafficked women compel other women to become prostitutes; they are following a career path that they knew was feasible. Thanks to this *modus operandi*, the continuity of a criminal system and a female gender-oriented business is guaranteed over time (DNA 2012; UNICRI 2010; UNICRI/UNODC 2003).

3.3.2. Voodoo Rites and Magic

The historical origins of voodoo rites date to ancient times. These rites supposedly first appeared in the current state of Benin (Beneduce 2003). As claimed by several sources (Aikpitany 2011; Beneduce 2003; Métraux 1958; Van Dijk 2001), the voodoo rites originally had a positive function in the traditional Nigerian communities and were practiced to defend the good. In general, the purpose of voodoo was to prevent suffering and illness caused by epidemic diseases through purges and vow-making during which the presence of the gods was evoked. According to Métraux (1958), during the western colonialism and the forced deportation of Africans, the old rituals and the cult of spirits helped the deported people to resist persecution and oppression.

Concerning voodoo's protective functions, Van Dijk has observed that each step or element related to traveling abroad (i.e., border control, passports, visas and air tickets) is still regarded by Africans as something that belongs to the realm of spiritual empowerment. Therefore, the voodoo ceremony is considered by the people as a necessary step before leaving their native country to have a trouble-free travel (Van Dijk 2001).

The current strength of voodoo rites is linked to the well-rooted African belief that the body is not only physical but is also part of a spiritual world. In this view, the body can be subjugated and possessed by shadows and spirits (Beneduce 2009; De Martino 2003; Nicolini 2006). The evocation of gods during the voodoo rites is understood to oblige the two contracting parties to respect their vows in the physical and spiritual realms. Breaking the arrangement would anger the gods and could jeopardize the lives of the individuals who do not honor the terms of the agreement (Van Dijk 2001; Okojie 1992).

In line with such rites and fears, it must be acknowledged the belief on a female god known as Mami Wata. The girls who have undertaken Mami Wata's initiation rites (called as Mami Wata's daughters) must respect the rules and the behaviours imposed by that female spirit. Otherwise the spirit will punish them with terrible illness and the death. In the Nigerian tradition, the Mami Wata's daughters are usually described as beautiful girls who look for an easy life in the richness with a free and unrestrained sexuality. Such a representation of Mami Wata's daughters culturally legitimates the trafficked girls' work in prostitution at the eyes of their home communities (i.e., trafficked women are possessed by the Mami Wata and they behave under her will):

“The individual accumulation of wealth, ostentation of outer beauty, the absence of links and their expulsion from roles of wives and mothers makes women prostitutes perfect embodiment of Mami Wata, to which they must pay homage to guarantee success, autonomy and enrichment” (Interview no. 13).

The traditional super-naturalism remains vital in Nigerian society (Aikpitany 2011): “In Africa, you born animist and also when you become Christian or Muslim you will carry inside the ancient faith as a tattoo in your soul” (Interview no. 13).

People generally trust in the power of rituals and use rituals to achieve their own personal purposes (Beneduce 2003; Carling 2006; De Martino 2003; DNA 2010). In this regard, Van Dijk (2001) has observed that the same trafficked girls do not typically perceive voodoo and traditional rituals as intimidating and coercive *per se*. In the perspectives of these women, the religious rituals provide protection and help them to succeed in their businesses:

“Nigerian girls go on the streets 'armed of magic', and men who go with them fall under their charm. Whatever these women ask, the clients will do. (...) I [the respondent] met a man who gave all his severance package to a Nigerian girl. This girl told me she had put a spell on him” (Interview no. 24).

The Juju, the voodoo rite, it's not a bad practice. It was used to bring justice, but they [she refers to the traffickers] ruined everything,” (interview no.13).

The modern, negative interpretation of voodoo that spread among Nigerian migrants stems from its current role in international trafficking. It originates in Africa, where the madams and traffickers use voodoo rituals to ensure control over the trafficked women (Beneduce 2003). Voodoo basically consists of an oath taken in front of a traditional priest in which the woman swears to pay off her debts to the madam:

“The girls are taken by the traffickers to participate in a voodoo rite that instills a kind of fear in them. The rite is an oath in front of a priest who declares that if the girl does not pay off the debt an evil spirit will be invoked and will kill her. The priest takes some objects to the girl such as blood, nails or hairs. These objects are used to invoke the evil spirit and send him against the girl” (Interview no. 24).

Because of the harm that priests and madams can potentially do to the trafficked woman through voodoo, such a rite typically produces in the woman a condition of dependence to her exploiters and an exaggerated sense of obligation to respect the vows taken (Aikpitanyi 2011; Beneduce 2003; Carchedi et al. 2007).

As noted by the social-service providers, the Nigerian women who fail to fulfill their vows occasionally suffer psychological trauma, and their greatest fear is that an unimaginable misfortune will fall upon them or their family (TAMPEP 2009; UNICRI 2010). The madam exploits this feeling of subjugation to pursue her own interests and to oblige her victim to pay an exorbitant amount of money.

By using traditional religious rites, the Nigerian criminals create a binding and unbreakable bond with the trafficked woman that will unite her life with the lives of the trafficking offenders; this guarantees the loyalty of the trafficked woman to her exploiters and madams. It is important to recognize therefore that the voodoo rites reinforce the roles of those who participate in trafficking.

PART II

Nigerian Trafficking in Women: The Italian Case

CHAPTER IV

The Hierarchy in the Nigerian Trafficking in Women: The Pyramidal Structure vs. the Horizontal Structure

Before analysing the female mobility in the THB hierarchy, the trafficking offenders' profile and the way how they have structured their criminal enterprises must be acknowledged. Based on the words of the researcher's informants, this Chapter wants to answer to the following questions: is Nigerian THB held by organized crime groups? How do Nigerian offenders organize THB industry? Are there Nigerian criminal networks?

By analysing Nigerian groups operating in Italy, the internal structure of Nigerian cells and the roles of women involved in the sex industry can finally emerge.

4.1 Nigerian Trafficking in Women: Is It Organised Crime?

The case law⁵⁶ of the Italian Supreme Court recognises a Mafia-type association when three or more persons make a systematic use of intimidation and conditions of subjection deriving there from to commit crimes, to gain control over economic activities and to acquire unlawful advantages. This definition refers to article 416-bis penal code according to which three core elements play a role in Mafia-type offence: (1) a permanent or stable associative bond among members; (2) the criminal plan and (3) an organisational structure⁵⁷.

Nigerian trafficking is managed by a number of groups international in nature and with an extensive networking ability (DNA, 2012). These criminal syndicates trafficking in women show relevant differences in the size of their organisational structures and in the number of people they transfer and exploit. Through these two parameters, it is possible to distinguish among Nigerian organisations working on small scale (with one or two

⁵⁶For more information see Court of Cassation Section I sentence n.6693/1979; Court of Cassation Section I, sentence n.3042/1992; Court of Cassation section I sentence n.10107/1998; Court of Cassation Section V sentence n.3340/1999.

⁵⁷The typical behaviours of the members of such associations are the subjection of the individuals to the organisation and the obligation of silence.

members), medium scale (from two to five members) and large scale. The most threatening organised crime groups are those capable of controlling the entire trafficking process (large scale groups) from recruitment to forced labour or prostitution, including transportation, the provision of documents, the execution of high level corruption and money laundering. These groups have the capacity to handle large numbers of victims and have established logistical bases and contacts in origin, transit and destination countries (Europol 2011: 11). For the stability of the bonds among the members and the large criminal plan, these groups are more easily read as Mafia-type associations.

The presence of a number of Nigerian groups holding in THB industry, however, suggests a structure of network of cells working with a considerable degree of autonomy; as acknowledged by Europol (2011) Nigerian groups are mostly formed of independent cellular structures where each criminal cell tends to expand their orbit of action, developing branches and contacts in European and extra-European countries. The key to their effectiveness is their ability to operate independently while drawing on an extensive network of personal contacts (12).

It basically means that Nigerian trafficking offenders are not grouped in a unique organisation under a strongly hierarchical model but are divided in several criminal groups that show a great deal of flexibility and a high level of specialisation: i.e., Nigerian traffickers operate through a system of network links not easily visible from the outside⁵⁸. According to Prina (2003) such African criminal networks are usually short-term alliances formed for specific projects, and they are constantly in changing (92).

In conclusion, while it is not always easy to include Nigerian trafficking offenders in a Mafia type association (as it is defined in the article 416-bis Italian penal code), it is clear that all Nigerian trafficking offenders (both individuals and criminal groups) base their criminal action on consolidated networks.

⁵⁸ According to Carling (2006) the not hierarchal model explains the reason why West African criminal networks are not known by any particular name even though they are important in large parts of the world.

4.1.1 How Trafficking in Nigerian Women Works? The Hypothesis of the Three Levels

The Nigerian trafficking system and the roles or functions of its actors have been analysed by several UN, IO and national law enforcement agencies (Prina, 2003; UNICRI, 2003; IOM, 2010; DNA 2010). Even though the actors and the steps of the THB are well known, each study tends to build its own model regarding Nigerian trafficking offence. In a 2006 IOM Report on Nigerian trafficking of women to Italy, for instance, the madam has been strongly emphasised as the actor who plays the core role in the business, from recruiting of women to their final exploitation (Carling, 2006)⁵⁹. Generally, all the studies on THB have highlighted the presence of at least three actors who take action in one or more phases of trafficking: i.e., 1. the sponsor; 2. the trafficker and 3. the madam.

In these paragraphs, Nigerian trafficking is described as it was reported to the author by Italian public prosecutors (Interviews no. 2 and 23) and some privileged social observers (Interviews no. 17,18,19 and 24): their distinctive interpretation of the phenomenon provide information on the way how Nigerian trafficking industry is spread in Italy and on the *modus operandi* of Nigerian criminal network.

According to the mentioned sources, the structure of Nigerian criminality can be acknowledged through three organisational levels where different actors perform a set of tasks. In this view, the headquarters (that Mancini calls the “mother house”) of the organisation is placed in Nigeria, where the recruitment of victims is carried out. Then, the organisation branches out in business units which provide logistical support for the transport of the victims and their exploitation in the destination country (Carchedi et al., 2007; Mancini, 2009). Such a criminal model can be resumed by the Table 4.1.

⁵⁹ Using this view, Carling has represented trafficking from Nigeria to Italy through a diagram where the THB offence develops in the following way: one of the circle of acquaintances of the girl provides her first contact with the madam who then becomes her sponsor. Once the trafficked girl arrives in Italy, she lives and works under the control of a madam (supported in her tasks by the black boys) who is a counterpart of the madam in Nigeria (Carling, 2005).

Level	Reference name	Main tasks and features	Roles in trafficking structure
1 ^o	Mother House: <i>Madams or sponsors (local priest)</i>	- Recruiting; - It is highly structured; - Location: Nigeria	Relationship of exchange with the cells
2 ^o	Semi-autonomous groups: <i>Trolley or Italos</i>	- Transferring; - No ethnic connotation	The size of their work depends from the orders of the Mother House and Madams
3 ^o	Cells in destinations countries <i>Madams and her accomplices (madam's partner/procurer)</i>	- Exploitation; - Madams as main referral subject; - Ethnic connotation	Relationship of exchange with the Mother House

Table 4.1

As the Table shows, three main levels make up Nigerian trafficking:

1st level. The so-called mother house is composed by all those members of the criminal organisation who live in Nigeria and who act mainly in women's recruiting and making travel arrangements. According to some commentators, these actors work through an highly structured organisation that represents the headquarters of the criminal organisation: it is responsible for the whole business (Interview no. 23). The individuals who take part at this stage of the THB usually cover the role of *sponsors* who act as guarantor of the trafficked girls by financing the journey:

“We are talking about a well organized system. This organization works as a sort of ‘centre for employment’ that recruits girls in the country of origin. The organization sorts girls everywhere thanks to widespread network links. This kind of ‘centre for employment’ have bonds with some individuals in the destination or transit countries who serve as connection points” (Interview no.19)

“When investigations are carried out thoroughly it seems clear that there is a kind of headquarters of the criminal organisation in Nigeria. The victims also originate in

Nigeria. The control centre for the trafficking is almost always in Nigeria, where the leaders of the criminal organization live...Certainly there is a criminal network that handles 'recruitment' of the victim and the travel arrangements to the country of destination (advances of money, contracting debts, etc.). All of these activities are carried out from the top of the criminal organisation in Nigeria and are very much standardised" (Interview no. 23).

The mother house or the headquarters maintains a relationship of mutual benefit with the single cells operating in the different European countries: the headquarters provides the raw material of the business for which each cell gives it part of earnings coming from the women's exploitation.

2nd level. Semi-autonomous groups work in transferring of victims. These groups or individuals — known as *trolleys*, *italos* or *drivers* — draw the routes for overland travel and find uncontrolled and hidden locations to accommodate women for entire months. During these overland journeys, the women start to be exploited in the prostitution⁶⁰. By anticipating the exploitation step, the trolleys work themselves as exploiters and pimps, making their business in the trafficking industry as profitable as possible:

"During overland journeys, trafficked women are stopped in some locations from one or two days or for entire months. The journey is very long: from Benin City to Tunis, or Tangier, are almost 4,000 km. The overland journey is chosen by traffickers especially when people have false identity documents. (...) During the travelling, everything can happen... the persons who transfer women, known as *drivers*, become women's exploiter. They force women to work and fit them into prostitution. Such a stage is forced and due" (Interview no. 18).

"The overwhelming majority of Nigerian women performs overland journeys crossing the desert. While just a small group of women travels by plane. Anyway, the starting point is always Benin City (...). Nigerian women told us that during their overland journey, they were accommodated in a house, known as connection house (...). In Tripoli, women were closed in some houses, called as African houses...basically, these were brothels where women were tortured and forced into prostitution" (Interview no.17).

As reported in the empirical evidences, during overland journeys, traffickers use consolidated routes. The efficiency of such a system is guaranteed by a net of relations with individuals located in each crossed country: "Solomon had to transfer a young Nigerian woman named Charity Eboigbe (born in 1989). She was disappeared from the

⁶⁰ It usually happens when women arrive in Libya: Here, they are closed in local brothels and forced into prostitution.

reception centre of Roggeveen in Amsterdam, in August 25, 2006. The day August 28, Solomon contacted the user 329/6084998 and spoke with a man to tell him about the arrival of Charity in Naples” (quoted in Omofona Priscilla case, 2010: 14).

Even though *trolleys* and cells in the destination countries collaborate each others, sometimes their interests are clearly in contrast: while the first group tries to make the journey as long as possible, the cells in the destination country want a quick and safe travel for their “merchandise” (Interview no. 18).

In spite of these disagreements, traffickers always work in concert with the criminal organisation as their survival depends on the commissions they receive from madams and sponsors⁶¹.

Individuals involved in transferring of women usually come from different ethnic groups: they are citizens of the countries that are crossed during the trafficked women’s overland journey (such as Niger or Mali), or even nomads.

3rd level. The cells in the destination country are responsible for the reception of the victims and their final exploitation.

The cells have a considerable degree of autonomy from the headquarters in Nigeria. They decide how to exploit the woman, her movements around Italian territory⁶² and the eventual punishment/penalty when the sex worker does not comply with her tasks.

Despite this high degree of independence, the cells need to build a strong linkage with the mother house, and a large part of their activity consists in negotiating with the organisation in Nigeria (Carchedi et. al 2007). In fact, the opportunity for the cell to have many women to exploit, and thus increasing incomes, depends on the accomplices in Nigeria providing for new girls:

“The cells are groups with a considerable degree of autonomy from what I have called the ‘headquarters’: the relationship between the cell and headquarters is of mutual benefit. The headquarters provides the cell with women for exploitation, for which a fee is paid, or better a down payment or a lump sum for the service” (Interview no. 23).

⁶¹ In the Nigerian case the partnerships most of time are with other African citizens where, however, a Nigerian remains in command (Leman and Janssens, 2013).

⁶² Also in this last phase of the trafficking, the victim may be transferred and exchanged several times from one cell to another one.

“Nigerian traffickers do not refer to a monolithic organization...Nigerian THB is fragmented in several groups spread throughout Italian regions” (Interview no. 2).

In a typical Nigerian organisation, this phase is managed by a businesswoman, the *madam*, who is helped in fulfilling her duties by her partner/procurer or other male figures (such as the *black boy*). These latter are responsible for intimidating the trafficked women and controlling the work place of the prostitutes.

In conclusion, attempting to outline relevant features of Nigerian criminal model, the figure 4.2 can be drawn: the three main subjects involved in the THB industry - i.e., (a) the Mother House, (b) the groups or the individuals operating in women’s transferring and (c) the Italian cells – are linked each other:

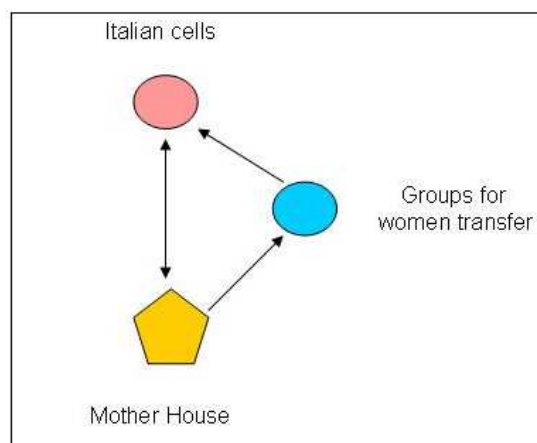


Figure 4.2

As the figure 4.2 shows, Nigerian THB works by these rules and models:

- *Mutual beneficial relationships among the cells, the groups or individuals operating in women’s transferring and the mother house;*
- *Well rooted links between the cells in Italy and the headquarters in Nigeria;*
- *A flexible and not hierarchical structure based on networks.*

In conclusion, the presence of strong associative bonds with the chiefs in Nigeria linked with the cells of a widespread criminal network (throughout Europe and the United States) enables this criminality to move rapidly and react quickly to actions against THB implemented by law enforcement agencies (Prina, 2003; Leman and Janssens, 2013).

Such an analysis on Nigerian trafficking industry produced by the researcher's informants is confirmed by the last Report of the Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (2012): it emphasises a relevant presence throughout Italy of well-structured Nigerian criminal branches that work as a *criminal holding*⁶³.

4.2 The Pyramidal Structure vs. the Horizontal Structure

As highlighted in the previous paragraph, Nigerian criminal cells operate both as independent criminal actors and as units of more structured and large organised crime groups. While, in the first case, the cells collaborate each other on a horizontal plane, in the second case, they represent the “pawns” of a hierarchical organisation that acts under international criminal plans. Such a structure has been confirmed in several court trials; e.g., in the Omofona Priscilla case, Nigerian cells working independently have been discovered both in North and South Italy. What is interesting to note is that each cell was tied to the same criminal clan in Nigeria:

“[T]wo distinct groups in contact with each other: the group headed by Prince Edosa and a cell in Verona. Although not directly related, they had same referents for providing girls as if they were clients of the same seller. ... The taped conversations showed that in Nigeria, Waid and other individuals recruited girls to be transferred, and they organised their travel to Italy. The girls were received in Italy by Edosa [a Nigerian trafficker]” (quoted in the Omofona Priscilla case, 2010: 12-17).

In regard to this model, Leman and Janssens claim that when the business units in the destination countries remain in contact with their clan in Nigeria, a pyramidal structure under the command of a clan chief can be supposed (Leman and Janssens, 2013). In Nigerian trafficking, this happens when the criminal organisation works on a large scale. In such a case, the chiefs of the organisation are men who manage the enterprise from Nigeria, while a female leadership is limited to the cells in the country of destination.

⁶³ The DNA states that Nigerian criminality operates through the following rules and models: a. flexibility of the organisational model that allows them to easily run several profitable illegal businesses (from drug trafficking to counterfeiting to prostitution) and thus to diversify their sources of income; b. an intercontinental network of criminal cells where each single local cell has a certain level of autonomy while remaining tied to the leaders that manage the business from Nigeria; c. a high ability to share transnational criminal plans without conflicting with the other ethnic criminal groups that work in the same geographical territories or criminal sectors.

“The THB representatives in the origin and destination countries send trafficked women based in the territory where they are requested...in these territories, there are the *mamans*. Behind these women, there are Nigerian men” (Interview no. 19).

In organised crime groups with an international vocation, indeed, the madam loses her key role in the trafficking business in order to serve the objectives of more structured criminal groups⁶⁴. Even in those large scale organisations, however, the sexual exploitation activity remains a female task: in fact, the presence of a madam in the system allows THB entrepreneurs to lure into prostitution new sex workers without compromising themselves (Leman and Janssens, 2013).

The main result of such a criminal model is to create a perverse circuit of mutual involvement of all individuals lured into trafficking, including victims, with the main effect to limit any internal defection (DNA, 2012).

A clear understanding of the structure of Nigerian cells operating in Italy, therefore, needs a deeper analysis of the relationships among the individuals who constitute the Italian cell. As empirical data show a number of current madams were trafficked women (Carchedi and Bernardotti, 2007; Siegel, 2011) who moved towards the organisational side in the trafficking hierarchy. Looking such a vertical career path, a pyramid scheme seems to be a believable way to represent the structure of an Italian cell:

“There is a kind of hierarchy...Nigerian women who prostitute themselves from a long time go to live with an ‘expert woman’ who is not a madam...in trafficking she is in a step below than that of the madam” (interview no. 17).

While the trafficked women hold the lowest position, the madams are usually at the top of the hierarchy, playing the role of the entrepreneur in the Italian sex market. In a middle position, there are sex workers, female guardians and madam’s favourites who attempt to advance in the business by collecting money to buy their own girls to sell in the sex market. The Italian cell’s structure can be represented by the figure 4.3:

⁶⁴ This is reported, for instance, in the Koolvis case (dated 2009) where a large Nigerian group formed of travel agents, madams, drivers, guards, and priests was under the leadership of two Nigerian men: Solomon O. and Gilbert E. (Siegel, 2011).

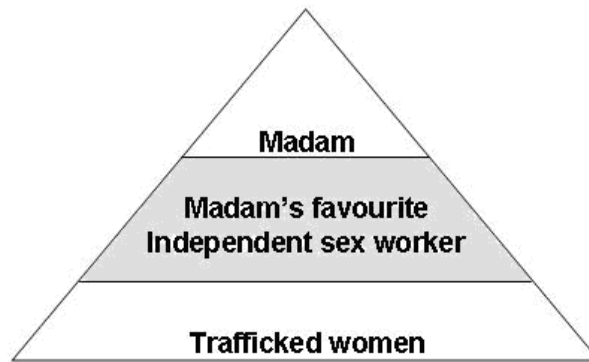


Figure 4.3

Concerning the structure of Italian cells, in recent years, however, a new contrasting trend has been pointed out from some observers who recognise more horizontal relationships between cell's actors. "The collaboration between the madams and their victims is now stronger...it makes even more ambivalent trafficked women position in the trade" (Interview no. 2)

These observers state that trafficked women have currently greater freedom of action than in the past. Indeed, in some cases, trafficked women have asked to renegotiate the amount of their debt or to be assigned to another madam:

"Some girls have fought back. Some have told their madams they will not pay any more because they have already given enough. Some women have threaten to call the police. Threat of official action is a powerful deterrent for criminals. And if madams know the girl has come here, in Pellegrino della Terra, they are still more afraid" (Interview no. 24).

According to the majority of those observers, the apparently more equal standing of trafficked women in Nigerian criminal groups hides a new strategy adopted by traffickers. These latter tries to achieve the voluntary collaboration of the trafficking victims, by allowing women to keep some money for them or avoiding high levels of physical violence:

"In short, the madams no longer use force on the girls. They understand that if the girl is unhappy and is often beaten, sooner or later, she will go to the police. Now the madams are all sweetness and light with their girls. They call them sisters. This is the real criminal system" (Interview no. 24).

“It is true that today Nigerian girls have achieved a greater autonomy. Madams have finally realized that if trafficked girls have some freedom, they avoid girl’s official complaints. So, for instance, they give girls more money and, generally, make their living conditions more tolerable” (Interview no. 16).

Through these mild behaviours, pimps and madams try to achieve women’s trust aimed at performing their business in a more collaborative way. In this regard, Vivian Wiwoloku reports that madams in Palermo work in partnership with Nigerian men who play the role of the women’s fiancés: their common purpose is to keep trafficked girls under control and to take for them the women’s earnings. Through subtle strategies, it become very difficult for trafficked women to realize of being deceived

“In Palermo, these men pretend to be the girls’ boyfriends and live off their earnings. In fact, they work for the madams because they convince the girl to pay all of the debt. In this way, the girls end up paying the pimp and their madams. It’s a real trap. Once they used violence against the girls; now they try ‘softer’ methods. The madams have learned that if they are nice with the girls, they don’t get angry and don’t make official complaints. So it’s just business as usual” (Interview no. 24).

In accordance with these new trends, Carchedi confirms that violence against trafficked women is becoming more psychological and symbolic because traffickers and pimps have understood that the use of coercive means is counter-productive for the well being of the business:

“From the traffickers point of view, the girl is firstly a street merchandise and she cannot be spoiled with any evident signs of beatings or blows as the client could not like it” (interview no. 18).

In this regards, Albano notes that through a lower use of physical violence Nigerian criminals have really halved women’s disaffection and their attempts to escape from the THB industry (interview with Teresa Albano, held in Roma at IOM Office, January 12, 2012). The main consequences due to those new strategies and to less hierarchal relationships among the actors of Nigerian criminal cells are that:

- *The former trafficked girls are more easily led to take part in the trade as partners in crime*
- *The grey areas in trafficking offences and the middle role are broadened.*

4.3 A Focus on Networks: Does a Network of Madams Exist in Italy?

Concerning to the exploitation phase, the following question needs to be answered: Does a network of madams exists in Italy?

Before trying to answer to that issue, two main characteristics of Nigerian cells in Italy have to be acknowledged:

- *The well demonstrated ability of madams to locate and transfer their trafficked women in any place or circumstance;*
- *The ability of madams to move victims all around Italy without losing control over them*

Carchedi claims that a female network is the most visible part of Nigerian THB offence in Italy: that female net originates from Nigeria and branches out in all European countries, especially in Italy.⁶⁵

In accordance with this view, some recent police investigations have found evidences on the existence of a Nigerian criminal network in Italy: in 2011, the CARONTE investigation detected a Nigerian organisation spread throughout the country able to manage each phase of trafficking. In 2012, thanks to the SAHEL 2 operation, a Nigerian trans-national association was identified. This group was subdivided into different cells that exploited women sexual work both in North and South Italy (DNA, 2012):

“The investigations have identified a trans-national association of Nigerian matrix, divided into cells family-based and active in different places in Abruzzo and Lombardy for the purpose of exploitation of young women who were brought from Nigeria by well-established mechanisms of recruitment and psychological conditioning” (Operation SAHEL, Nota Stampa, ROS Carabinieri, 2012).

Because of well established bonds, Nigerian madams and pimps are able to reach their trafficked girls even when they are transferred, or taken under control by law enforcement agencies⁶⁶. In this regard, a number of trafficked women⁶⁷ report their

⁶⁵ In his empirical research on street prostitution in Castel Volturno (Campania region, South Italy), Carchedi demonstrates that Nigerian sex workers are controlled by a madam or *controller* who works on behalf of a madam in Nigeria (Bernardotti & Carchedi, 2007).

⁶⁶ The loose organisational form of the Nigerian networks is often very efficient and makes it more difficult for the police to fight their crimes (Carling, 2006).

⁶⁷For this ability of madams and pimps to reach the victims elsewhere, in the eyes of the majority of trafficked women the madam is perceived as a omniscient person made stronger through voodoo rituals

difficulties to break their bonds with traffickers because of the strict control exercised over them by groups of madams and pimps that are active in several Italian areas and that collaborate each other in the THB industry.

“C., the sister of F., the woman who had organised the journey from Nigeria, was waiting for us in Palermo. ...I worked in the Parco della Favorita in Palermo for nine months. ... In mid-July of 2008 the police stopped me for a check. I had no documents and therefore they took me to the police headquarters in Palermo and from there I was transferred to Rome. I was released and C. called me asking me to meet her in Milan, where her sister was living: C. had sold me to F., her sister. F. told me that she was my new *maman* and that from that time on I was supposed to pay her. She added that the money I had already given C. did not reduce my debt” (case by O.O. quoted in UNICRI, 2010: pp. 55-56).

In the case study reported by UNICRI, Nigerian pimps were able to reach the girl even when she was transferred to another town under the protection of a law enforcement agency.

In regards to the madams’ ability to keep their contacts with victims even when they are under state protection, Gargano⁶⁸ describes how this happens in the State Centre of Identification and Expulsion for illegal migrants in Roma. In this Centre, the incoming girls are automatically contacted by the madams living outside:

“When Nigerian girls arrive in Ponte Galeria Centre, they have Italian mobiles and are called by someone from outside... Their pimps charge periodically the women's mobile phones. The new girls are contacted by their pimps and also by other Nigerian women accommodated here, in the centre, who works on behalf of the madams” (Interview no. 17).⁶⁹

Such an organisational strength suggests the existence of strong social interactions among Nigerian criminals and of an intensive exchange of information related to those Nigerian citizens who live, or who temporarily stay, in Italy.

(see Chapter III).

⁶⁸ Gargano is a social service worker who provides legal aid to Nigerian women received in the CIE in Ponte Galeria (Roma, Lazio).

⁶⁹ The reported practice (i.e., the systematic use of the state centres for illegal migrants as part of the trafficking process) is recorded also by law enforcement offices of other European states and is quite ordinary in Nigerian criminality. In the Koolvis case (2006), for instance, the Netherlands police found that local centres for the protection of victims of trafficking were used by traffickers as a fixed step of travel. In this case, indeed, the trafficked people were taught by their exploiters to declare to airport officers that they were victims of trafficking. In accordance with the local anti-trafficking law, thus, they were accommodated in centres while waiting to receive a staying permit. Once the permit was received, the traffickers organised the escape of the women to Italy.

Contrary to this view, other commentators claim that a network of madams in Italy can not really exist. The advocates of this approach justify the ability of pimps and traffickers to move women over all Italy by Nigerian communities that are spread throughout the country. These latter facilitate exchange of information on people and their movements.

“(…) It is not possible to state that there is a network [among madams], it would be too formal. Certainly there are Nigerian communities. It is inevitable that within them there are people and behaviors with a criminal nature. This also happens because the communities are strongly marked by ties of kinship. I take an example: when a madam needs to move a girl, who shows some signs of insubordination or who wants to go to the police, the madam takes contact with a relative living in a community of another Italian city and she moves the girl, remaining free of suspicion” (Interview no.23).

As described in the evidence, Nigerian communities in Italy serve the THB through their inner networks which are used by pimps and traffickers for illegal businesses.

This system has been clearly shown in the recent Solomon case: Lilian Solomon was a Nigerian girl of 23 years old who, after a period of abuse in the street, decided to denounce her persecutors. She ended to die for a cancer.

The criminal proceeding against Solomon’s offenders ended in April 2013 with five Nigerian citizens found guilty of trafficking and creating slavery-like conditions:

“[T]he victim had serious health problems. She had a miscarriage and was admitted to hospital in Milan. From there she was moved to Abruzzo on the basis of a kinship tie between the madam's partner — who was involved in 'managing' the girls — and those who received the girl in Abruzzo. So, these are the types of situations that usually arise: it is undoubtedly true that a foreign community always creates a rich network of contacts and acquaintances in the destination country” (Interview no. 23).

In accordance with this view, the Nigerian priest, Vivian Wiwoloku, denies the existence of a female network of madams in favour of Nigerian male brotherhoods spread all over Italy:

“Well, there are brotherhoods. These have created a network throughout Italy and are composed mostly by male net that collaborate in the prostitution racket. There are also some women. These brotherhoods was originally established by Nigerian University students. It is a type of Mafia. For example, in Naples they act as intermediaries between the Camorra and the madams. They pay the protection money” (Interview no. 24).

The Nigerian brotherhoods are composed of male trafficking offenders who work in partnership with the madams, performing a set of tasks based on the circumstances and social features of the territory where they operate: from developing agreements with Italian Mafias to running prostitution in its territory and keeping control over the trafficked girls.

4.4 Nigerian Communities and Churches: The Palermo Case

A further element has to be added to better understand the criminal social milieu that Nigerian trafficked women find after their arrival in Italy: i.e., the Nigerian communities and Churches located in Italy.

Nigerian communities have reproduced in Italy some typical African social networks where the members can find forms of protection and assistance:

“There is a kind of bond of brotherhood among the members of the Nigerian community. They are all brothers and sisters and actually they call each others with those nicknames that are not just conventional ones but represent the deep relationships among the community members. It is difficult to get out” (Interview no. 19).

Like their fellow citizens, the trafficked women take part in these communities and attend African Churches. Although madams generally tend to isolate their victims, in fact, it is unusual that madams and traffickers do not allow their women to participate to the local African life.

Based on this observation, some questions related to such communities arise: *Do African Churches play a role in the trafficking business? Are there links or relationships between the THB offenders and Nigerian communities in Italy?*

There are no clear answers to these questions because data gathered by scholars and social services providers show contrasting viewpoints (Carchedi, 2007).

According to a number of researchers and observers, Nigerian associations of a cultural and religious type are dedicated to the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation as a hidden activity in addition to the legal ones. Such associations are based on a strong internal cohesion, on the existence of internal rules which, if broken, bring about expulsion from the group⁷⁰. In support of this hypothesis, it has been found that

⁷⁰This modus operandi recalls the negative networks as defined by Field (paragraph, Charter I).

Nigerian madams in Castel Volturno exercise a growing and exclusive power in the local Nigerian community as they are also the main financial supporters of the local African Church. In this case, the Nigerian community can be regarded as the social milieu where madams strengthen their authority: “Some madams in Castel Volturno have achieved a kind of authority in the local Nigerian community by offering money to the Evangelical Church” (Interview no. 15).

In accordance with this position on African Churches, several trafficked women in their personal accounts have declared that some Nigerian priests convinced them to respect their traffickers (Interview no. 17); in his biography Isoke Aikiptiany has denounced in clear terms Nigerian priests who use their spiritual authority in order to push trafficked women to obey their madams:

“False priests are accomplices of traffickers. They make pressures over victims of trafficking who look for them to get some help. These priests convince the victims that they must obey and pay off the debt because it is the God's will” (Interview no. 13).

Because of the great importance that the Nigerians give to all the aspects of the spiritual life (e.g., the Sunday liturgies⁷¹), the priests often hold key roles and functions within ethnic communities (Interview no. 21) and arrive to exercise a great influence over Nigerian devoted women. According to some Italian social workers, some African priests show not to use in a correct way their role, and they work in complicity with trafficking offenders: in exchange for the psychological conditioning that priests exercises over the trafficked women, they receive part of the amount of money that traffickers extort to their victims:

“There are some African priests who get a profit over exploited girls. They do some prayers because the woman continues to work in the street. They are paid for that” (Interview no. 21).

The rooted presence of Nigerian communities throughout the country makes them the ideal networks for the organised crime groups and its illegal activities.

In conclusion, the Nigerian communities are complex social milieu where it is possible to find the two opposing figures of the trafficking business: the victims and the persecutors:

⁷¹ From an African point of view, the liturgy is a fundamental rite for guaranteeing a safe life under God's benevolence.

“I think that around 90% of people belonging to Nigerian Communities have been trafficked or forced to prostitution ” (Interview no. 17)

“All foreign communities are melting pots or gathering places, where all things are possible ... and there is an inevitable promiscuity where the *madam* lives alongside the girl-victim” (Interview no. 23).

Attempting to provide the reader with first hand sources, in the next paragraph a case of Nigerian community is analysed.

4.4.1 The Nigerian Community in Palermo

The Nigerian community of Palermo well represents the above mentioned ambiguous social settings. Thanks to a Protestant priest, Vivienne Wiwoloku, and the support of the local Protestant Church, the community has founded a non profit organization, named as Pellegrino della Terra Association.

The Association works in one of the poorest and needy Palermo town districts: Oreto. The quarter is located in the southeast part of the town, behind the Central Railway Station. The quarter is degraded with crumbling buildings packed close together, and narrow and dirty streets; it is crossed by a little river along which people have realized some vegetable gardens. The Oreto district is populated mainly by foreigners, especially coming from Africa and China. Walking in its streets, in fact, it is possible to find several ethnic shops and to meet black women carrying the purchases on the head, in a typical African way. The quarter shows an heterogeneous and multi-ethnic population and it is inhabited both by Italians and foreigners.

The Pellegrino della Terra association offers assistance to Nigerian women (some of them protected through article 18 TU, see Chapter III), by providing the main following services:

- Spiritual assistance;
- Professional training and teaching of Italian language;
- Job searching

To conduct all these activities, the association has two different offices located in Noce quarter and Oreto quarter. The teaching and training activities are performed in the Oreto quarter’s office where the association has started to operate in quite recently, in 2010.

In the past, the office was located in another Palermo district (via dei Candelai) where a Mafia clan exercised a pressing control over each commercial, and non commercial, enterprise. The local clan pretended to impose its protection to the association in exchange of a fixed fee (the well known *pizzo*) but Wiwoloku refused to pay it, and the association was finally moved in Oreto quarter for security reasons. Now, it occupies a little flat that was confiscated to Mafia groups.

Pursuing the above mentioned objective, the association has established some training courses aimed at strengthening women's autonomy and has helped women to get the six month resident permit (foreseen in the Article 18 Consolidated Text, see Chapter III, *paragraph 3.1*).

According to Wiwoloku, the first aid trafficked women need to free themselves from the trafficking chains is the spiritual support. Because these women are scared of voodoo's evil effects, it is important to convince them that those practices can not provoke any real harm. In this regards, he notes that the prayer has good effects on trafficked women: indeed, through the spiritual assistance, women become more self-confident and are able to recover themselves from psychological troubles they suffer. Only after having freedom themselves from the fear of voodoo, the girls can finally make official complaints against their persecutors.

Concerning trafficked girls' behaviours, Wiwoloku notes that they show to be less scared on their madams and behave in a more proud way than in the past: for instance, some girls have renegotiated the total amount of the debt or have threatened their madam to go to the police.

In response to the positive actions in favour of Nigerian women performed by Pellegrino della Terra association, very violent occurrences happened in the Community: in 2012 and 2013, two Nigerian women working in the streets were killed and Wiwoloku was menaced by unknown Nigerian citizens who burnt his car and beat his family in Nigeria.

These acts of violence were probably forms of retaliation for the assistance that Wiwoloku provided to the trafficking victims in Palermo.

Trying to build an anti-trafficking net, in 2012, twenty-one organisations founded a Counter Trafficking Unit (Coordinamento Antitratta) and asked law enforcement

agency the state protection for Vivienne Wiwoloku. Till now, the state has not provided any form of protection or assistance.

This chain of violent occurrences shows in clear terms that two different and opposing factions exist nowadays in Nigerian community of Palermo: one of those makes profitable business through the trafficking and the sexual exploitation of girls.

Such an analysis is confirmed by Wiwoloku who acknowledges that the community is populated also by criminals who perform illegal activities. According the priest, this is the main reason why a large part of the community refuses to collaborate with him in victim's assistance.

Thus, in the Community is possible to find the two different faces of the THB industry: the offender and the victim. It is clear that some individuals working in the THB business try to make harder the trafficked women's assistance. In recent years, the criminal faction that inhabit the community has undermined Wiwoloku's social credibility and has discouraged girls to trusting him:

“Each time I tried to bring up in the community the issue of trafficking in women I was attacked. The reason is simple: you can not discuss about trafficking of women with those who run the business. They see you as an enemy. It is a never-ending struggle... They spread rumours about me and try to discredit me. For example, they tell girls not to approach me because I will bring them to the police and they will be expelled from the country. This is the way how they work. This tactic make success because victims have stopped to approach me to ask help. So, at this point, my activity is stopped” (interview no. 24).

Being aware of the ambiguous social setting of Nigerian community, Wiwoloku state that when the association was founded he kept away from it all the criminal elements. Concerning this sensitive issue, however, according two Italian social workers (respectively belonging to the Caritas and CISS Onlus⁷²) who assist Nigerian trafficked women (in some of the poorest Palermo town districts: Oreto and Santa Chiara), Pellegrino della Terra Association is currently inhabited by criminals and trafficking offenders:

“If we have in the same group both trafficking victims and their offenders, it is clear that the context becomes very dangerous. Violent behaviours are easier to be developed... When you go in Pellegrino della Terra Association you must not be

⁷²Caritas is a Catholic nongovernmental organisation. CISS is a laic NGO working mainly in the cooperation field.

surprised to find both madams and prostitutes ... In fact, its activities are addressed to both of them” (Interview no. 21).

“In the Nigerian community and the African Church you can find whoever. I means that there are both trafficking victims and their traffickers, they are so closer ... some trafficked women are married to their pimps” (Interview no. 19).

According the two social workers is not possible to keep far from an association founded within Nigerian community its criminal faction: there is too much promiscuity between victims and offenders. To this closeness among the two opposing actors, it must be added that currently the relationships between madams and trafficking victims are much more ambiguous and unclear than in the past.

According to Wiwoloku, madams are applying a new more subtle strategy towards their victims, that avoid the usage of violence as much as in the past. Madams have understood that coercive means end to damage their business. In fact, an higher level of violence against trafficked women increases the number of women who makes official complaints or who attempts to escape. Avoiding to use violence against women and guaranteeing them some fundamental rights, traffickers find easier to get the trafficked women’s collaboration. The very negative consequence of such a strategy is that the trafficked women are more easily convinced to become the traffickers’ accomplices. The inclusion of former victims in the trafficking business makes the criminal system more difficult to combat:

“The madam does not use any more violence against their women. She shows a more subtle behaviour: The madam flatters up her women. In this way, it is easier that women say ‘yes’ to become the madam’s accomplice in the business” (Interview no. 24).

Given this strategy, Wiwoloku states that the transfer of former trafficked women to the organisational side of the trafficking business is a frequent occurrence:

“When the girl has almost paid the total amount of her debt, the madam begins to promise that she will help her to bring to Italy another girl so that she will start the business for herself. In this way, the girl becomes an accomplice and can no longer denounce the madam” (Interview no. 24).

As Wiwoloku reports, while traffickers can guarantee to their ex trafficked girls profitable incomes, his association meets relevant problems to guarantee to Nigerian women a job. Given this circumstance, the girls wonder more carefully on the reason

why they must live an uncomfortable life instead of sharing the easy profits coming from trafficking and prostitution.

Even though the general level of violence has decreased, vicious acts against women sometimes occur: the life story of Vero is an example.

Vero⁷³ wanted to exit from prostitution to marry her Italian fiancé but she was killed and her body was burned. When Vero was murdered, she had just received the authorisation for her marriage. Wiwoloku believes that Vero's murder was as a kind of warning addressed to all the other Nigerian women working in Palermo streets. The message that traffickers wanted to send them was: "If you do not pay your debt, we will kill you as we did with Vero" (Interview no. 24).

The researcher worked as an Italian teacher for a group of 10 Nigerian women who belonged to Nigerian community of Palermo. They were chosen by priest Wiwoloku to attend upper-intermediate Italian lessons. The course consisted of two weekly meetings of two and half hours each, and it was performed from March to May. In order to collect some personal data of women who attended the course, the researcher asked them to write brief stories (two or three sentences) on the daily activities and life in Italy.

A Nigerian girl named K.⁷⁴ (23 years old) has the task to take care of logistics for the language sessions, from tickling the names of the students in the attendance sheet to providing educational material for the lessons. She lives in Altavilla, a suburb quite far from Oreto quarter.

K. complains about her house because it is uncomfortable and there is no heating, even though the season is still cold (it is March). So, she "sleeps tights with her baby" (from a Participant Observation, 20 March 2013, Palermo). K. speaks a very good Italian: It can be supposed that her excellent Italian is the main reason why she has been chosen by the priest to organise the course. K. is usually helped in her tasks by another young woman, V.: she is around 20 years old and has a son of around 4 years. Her Italian language is quite good as she arrived in Italy 12 years ago.

⁷³ This is the story of Faith but the priest names her as Vero, that is probably the African name of the girl.

⁷⁴ For privacy reasons, the author has decided not to mention the full names of Nigerian women she has met in the Pellegrino della Terra Association.

These two girls represent the Nigerian staff at the Pellegrino della Terra Association and perform counselling services for African women.

All Nigerian women who attend the course follow a tailoring course and have a nine-month work grant (under article 18 Consolidated Text). After that period they have to find a job. Four out of ten of women are 20-23 years old, the others are around 30-44 years old. All women have one or more sons. Nine out of ten of the women come from Benin City, while one comes from Lagos. Regarding the question on their origin town, women coming from Benin City have stressed that the right wording is “Benin City Nigeria” because, as they tell me, “Benin City is both a republic and a capital city” (from Participant Observation, 13 March 2013, Palermo). Except for K. and V., the rest of the women claim they arrived in Italy five years⁷⁵.

Even though women live in Italy from a quite long time, they speak a very poor Italian. The majority of them reads and writes Italian at the beginner level. What it is possible to suppose from this finding is that they do not use Italian language in the daily life: I have observed, in fact, that they speak each other in a mix of African-English, called Nigerian *pidgin*⁷⁶. Furthermore, they have little knowledge of Italian geography: during a lesson, I have noticed they do not know the geographical position of Palermo in the Italian map. Conversely, they show good knowledge of some town districts: there are places that they recall frequently when speaking, such as the local open market *Ballarò* and the Waldesian Church (located in Noce quarter). The younger women claim to attend other places more than the Church and local markets, such as cinema and discos or pubs. They are also the most proficient students in Italian language.

All women claim to attend a Waldesian Church and follow the holy liturgy each Sunday: it is clear that women give great relevance to the Sunday liturgy and, generally, to the Religion. Indeed, from their speech appears that they strongly believe in God and in His benevolence because all the life depends from the God’s will.

⁷⁵It must be acknowledged that the truthfulness of these data cannot be assured: Indeed, when questioned these women tend to repeat the answers provided by other women.

⁷⁶This empirical information allows us to make relevant assumptions: The women's relations are often limited to others who share the same language. It is easy to understand that such behaviours are likely to estrange the Nigerian women from mainstream Italian society.

A clear example of this religious view was provided by V. during a meeting with the Pellegrino della Terra's staff: in this context, an Italian teacher complained about her teaching methods because she did not achieved the expected results. V. replied to the Italian teacher that her methodology was not the correct one, claiming that it was for the God's will. For the Italian social workers, it was quite difficult to understand what V. wanted to say through that statement. There was clearly a cultural gap.

The majority of women show on cheeks some marks which look like thin vertical lines. These signs are African tattoos that, according to animist religion, serve to protect people from evil spirits. This information confirms that old and traditional rituals are still alive in modern African societies, and that Nigerians can trust in animism and Christian religions at the same.

The majority of these women do not use their original African names but a false American or Italian name. This follows a custom spread among Nigerian female migrants: they use different name according to the circumstances they live.

This custom is explained in Isoke Aikpitanyi's biography where she says that she has used in her life almost three different names: Rose, Izogìè and Isoke. When she was working in the street she named herself as Izogìè. According to her experience, trafficked women tend to create nicknames to elaborate a dual identity: it is a simple device that help women to protect their mental health and spiritual integrity from all harms they experience on the streets.

Finally, I have observed that Nigerian women who attend the language sessions are quite friendly each other. They have the same group acquaintances: for example, for the marriage of a Nigerian girl (who did not attend the course but who belonged to Nigerian community) each woman received an invitation and went to the celebration (that day the lesson was stopped because there was no students).

During my lessons, I have observed only one behaviour that could hide some frictions among Nigerian women who attended the course: i.e., women always sat in the same places in the classroom. It was not a coincidence: each woman had a well allocated seat in the classroom and they did not want to change it. Two events made me clear such a dynamic: in the first case, there was an empty seat and I asked to the woman who was

far from the other students to sit beside her classmates but she refused hotly to do that. In the second case, there was just a small group of students in the classroom. A girl came later to the lesson and there were a lot of empty chairs where sitting, but she get another desk and chair and sat in her usual place, on the corner at the bottom of the class.

Even though there are not clear answers to those behaviours, it can be supposed that women arranged their position in the classroom according to some relationship of hierarchy. As stated by the Italian social assistants working in the association, the course was attended both by madams and trafficked girls.

4.4 Considerations

One of the most important findings of Nigerian model (as shown by the Figure 4.2) is that the madam plays a core role mainly in the last phase of the trafficking offence and in the cell of the THB destination countries. Her action in the other steps of the THB process is usually due to a mutual and beneficial exchange with the headquarters that is located in Nigeria: In this context, the madam plays the role of the mediator. Such a female position within Nigerian trafficking business has been confirmed by informants' words:

“The madams are at the heart of the exploitation cells in the countries of destination of the victims of trafficking. ... The madams do not handle all the traffic, only the individual victims. In this context, they can also have considerable managerial power and represent an entire geographic area, or they may have developed a network that enables them to rapidly transport victims over the whole Italian territory. However, within the system I described, it is clear that the madam must maintain a strong relationship with the central structure in Nigeria. That is, with that part of the organisation that systematically finds and transports the girls” (Interview no. 23).

In this contribution is recognised that the madam arrive to play a leadership role in the exploitation phase but she is not regarded as the most important actor in Nigerian international criminal networks.

According to the words of informants, Nigerian criminal model is established on bonds but the existence of a distinctive and consolidated female net among madams in Italy remains unknown. It is clear, however, that the use of network links makes up Nigerian

criminality in each step of THB offence. Thanks to such networking ability, trafficking offenders are able to overcome the geopolitical borders: as Leman and Janssens state (2013), a Nigerian madam in Belgium can get control of victims in Spain or Norway, and a Nigerian madam in Spain can send a girl to Belgium to work for her but under the supervision of the madam in Belgium (159).

Regarding the Nigerian networking, the ethnic communities and Churches located in Italy provide to the criminals spread and well established network links across all the country.

Looking those social milieux - where trafficking offenders live close to their victims - the reasons why madams allow their trafficked women to attend African communities in Italy become very clear: in those social settings, it is more likely that trafficked women come to accept their role of prostitutes and adopt prostitution and violence as ordinary models of life.

V CHAPTER

From Trafficked Woman to Madam. An Analysis on Vertical Mobility in Empirical Cases

“During an interview with a young Nigerian woman who attended a protection program for victims of trafficking, I [the researcher] asked her something about her life in the street but she always replied me in very general terms: «Somebody brought me here, in Italy» or «I was for a period in the street»... at the end of the interview, I had the chance to do a little walk with the woman. We were both the same age and far from home. A friendly conversation started about our families and origin cities. At that moment, she finally told me: «I was scared you wanted to ask me about the street. ... I want just to forget»” (from the interview no. 12).

A permanent feeling of fear regarding trafficking experience and its criminals is instilled in many Nigerian women who have been lured into THB. This feeling of fear stands out as the main tool that traffickers use to lead victims to comply with the trafficking criminal system (Beneduce, 2009). In front of such a *modus operandi*, a deeper analysis on the way how trafficked women enter the trafficking business must be done.

With this purpose, the chapter describes Nigerian women’s life in Italy when they hold the female roles of the trafficking hierarchy: (1) the trafficked woman, (2) the independent sex worker, and (3) the madam. Through this analysis, women’s career path in the trafficking hierarchy is finally pointed out.

5.1 On the Street as a Trafficked Woman

In this paragraph, the reasons that make true the following statement are analysed: “*The victim of trafficking is a person in a state of vulnerability and with a capacity of self-determination annulled or seriously limited*” (Interview no. 23).

As reported by several Nigerian trafficked women, the arrival in the destination country corresponds with the beginning of the exploitation phase. Once women arrive in Italy, they are taken to apartments where they will live under the direct control of the madam who will make clear the nature of their job and the exact amount of their debt:

“She [the madam] took us to a house that she had rented for us. After three days, C. brought us some very short and skimpy dresses. We asked her the reason for this and she answered by saying that we knew very well why. Right at that moment she told us that we had to sell ourselves on the streets. She menaced me and gave me a box of condoms. (quoted in UNICRI, 2010, case O.O).

“Some girls were brought to Italy by Nigerians who promised them a better life and a honest work such as beauticians, baby-sitters or jobs in the tourist sector. The overwhelming majority of these girls fall into the prostitution rings” (interview no. 24).

According to some social workers and Nigerian women’s accounts⁷⁷, a number of trafficked women are actually aware about the sexual nature of the job that they have to perform once arrived in Italy. These women usually accept sex work because are fascinated by the chance of an easy life and of better future perspectives.

“Nigerian woman knows what kind of work she has to do in Italy...then, when she is around 30 year old she will manage her own business” (Interview no. 4).

“The majority of women know she will work in the street...this does not mean that they are not victims...some of them end to be killed or burned alive” (Interview no. 16)

“It needs to acknowledge that Nigerian women follow their project of migration. In this context, they are assertive on the trafficking. I think that the typical question: “are women aware about the sexual purpose of trafficking?”, it is a stupid question. It is not important whether women were aware to end working in the sex market before leaving Nigeria. What is important to know is whether these women are now exploited and victimised” (Interview no. 17).

Even for those women who choose to come to Italy knowing of being employed into prostitution, indeed, the arrival coincides with the discovery of very low working conditions and harsh living standards; each trafficked woman experience a period of slave-like conditions which can be more or less a long time based on woman’s ability to profit thanks to prostitution (the forced labour runs from two to three years). During this period, women come to know several types of threat, deception and psychological and physic violence caused both by (1) the street prostitution and (2) the madam’s authority.

(1) The risks of a life in the street: a focus on Italian clients. Street prostitution is a high-risk activity where beatings, rapes and thefts are extremely common. According to

⁷⁷ The hypothesis that some of trafficked women are aware to end in the sex market of the destination state was assumed by all the interviewees for this research.

the Italian Association of victims and ex-victims of human trafficking, at least ten Nigerian women who worked as prostitutes were killed in 2012. These data are confirmed by true stories reported by NGO and local newspapers: for instance, from 2011 to 2013, at least three episodes of serious violence against Nigerian prostitutes were observed in the city of Palermo. In 2011, an Italian client killed a young Nigerian woman, named Favour, and burnt her body. The girl worked as a prostitute to pay off her debt but she was looking to leave the street thanks to the help of her Italian fiancé. In February 2012 the body of another Nigerian prostitute was found near a waste container in Palermo city centre, and in 2013 there were other very violent attacks against two Nigerian prostitutes.

A high level of violence against Nigerian national group has been recorded also by law enforcement officers who have found clear evidences of repeated violence by Italian clients against Nigerian sex workers: “a group attacked her [a Nigerian girl] and tortured her with the neck of a broken bottle” (Prina, 2003: 77).

According to some scholars, these violent behaviours against Nigerians are due to an alleged ethnic superiority that is rooted in the clients’ ideology (Di Nicola et al., 2009; Prina, 2003):

“Africans are cheaper. The more beautiful girls are more expensive and they are generally Moldavians or Romanians ... well you know ... blacks are dirty ... so you are not happy to go with an African. It’s not a matter of racism” (quoted by Interview no. 8, in Di Nicola et al. 2009).

“Eastern Europeans are much cleaner. Africans much dirtier... In my opinion, also punters who go with Africans are hygienically rotten because of their mental state or for other reasons” (quoted by Interview no. 1, in Di Nicola et al., 2009).

According to one of the ex victim of trafficking, Isoke Aikpitany, the explanation of clients' attacks against Nigerian women must be searched in the way how Italian clients perceive their going to black prostitutes. In Aikpitany's view, clients often see themselves as social executioners who must punish African sex worker because she is black, prostitute and a foreigner:

“Sometimes Italian men say bad words while they rape you...they tell you: bad nigger...What hell are you doing here? Stand in underwear at your home! I'll show you, filthy whore! Why do you come here? Go back in the forest with the apes” (Maragnani & Aikpitanyi, 2007: 75).

Among the most common types of violence that Nigerian women suffer on Italian streets, there are the group attacks. These collective assaults show in turn the tendency of Italian men to use prostitution as a male fun to have with a group of peers: “*In Bari you go there, even without a car, under a bridge, with some friends and spend some time. Twenty euros and that’s all*” (quoted by Interview No. 13, quoted in Di Nicola et al 2009). Group attacks against prostitutes are described in Aikpitanyi’s biography when she speaks about her experience on the street: “The gang rape occurs. Often. Three or four guys arrive and pick you up by force. You are lucky to get out alive...the first rape is most difficult to overcome. But you take comfort thinking you are still alive” (Maragnani & Aikpitanyi, 2007: 75).

In this regard, some observers have highlighted that collective violent behaviours⁷⁸ against black prostitutes are due to a strong social bias addressed to African people that is well spread in the Italian society. This racism philosophy becomes much more stronger when it is addressed to sex workers because prostitution itself is culturally refused: people see the female sex workers as corrupt women who have no inhibition and who are guilty for the morale decline of the society:

“Often sexual intercours happen on the streets...you see half-dressed women who make sex in the streets...It is an outrage for people” (Interview no. 2)

“[F]or long time in some suburban area close to Caserta, local people exhibited a kind of superstitious and childish curiosity towards Nigerian girls: people threw stones against the girls to see the colour of their blood or just to see them crying. It was a kind of sadistic fun” (Interview no. 16).

“Nigerian women are often regarded as ugly, dirty and bad people...here ‘Nigerian woman’ is synonymous of prostitute” (interview no. 19).

In addition to racist behaviours against black people, the researcher’s informants have reported that now a stereotyped image of prostitute as a Nigerian and black woman is very spread in Italian culture.

African women are perceived by the Italians as the lowest category of prostitute. Their low value is confirmed also by their prizes in the local sex market: while a sexual

⁷⁸ However, Nigerian sex workers are brutalised also by their own fellow citizens who vent their frustrations for their poor working and living conditions attacking the lowest and weakest level of society: the black prostitute (Bernardotti, 2007).

intercourse with a white girl is paid around 30 or 50 euros, the same with an African woman is usually paid 15, 10 or even 5 euros (in some streets of South Italy such as the Domitian area). This is explained because African sex market is addressed to the lowest social classes:

“Nigerian prostitution is directed towards the low end of the market...it is symptomatic of the fact that they are in the suburbs, they have lower charges therefore even the clients belong to the lower end of the customers” (Prina, 2003).

Because of the obvious abusive nature of sex work, women prostituting themselves often suffer physical and psychological trauma. Among Nigerian sex workers there is an high rate of occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases (HIV/AIDS) and of damage to the vaginal tract due to unsafe abortions and violence (Maragnani & Aikpitanyi, 2007; Beneduce, 2002; Pisoni et al., 2008). In addition, this group of sex workers suffers from chronic fatigue due to poor nutrition, drug abuse and sleep deprivation. Their very poor working and living conditions often affect them psychologically: they exhibit a number of problems from chronic anxiety to schizophrenic episodes (Ebegbulem, 2012).

(2) *The madams: a multiple subjugation.* In addition to all violence that women experience in Italian streets, trafficked women are often threatened, beaten or even killed by their madam and her collaborators (such as the *madam black's boys*⁷⁹ or the madam's favourite). The madam uses coercive means towards her trafficked woman when the woman does not accept her authority (e.g., refusing to work as prostitute)⁸⁰. In such cases, the madam calls on some actors who defer to her authority and have the task of coercing the trafficked girl until she gives in to their pressure: “She [the madam] started treating me very badly; she beat me up and did not give me food for days at a time. Once, she locked me in the house for three days in a row giving me only coffee, milk and a few cookies (quoted by UNICRI, 2010: 58).

⁷⁹ The madam's boy can be the madam's boyfriend or husband or a simply black guy paid exclusively to frighten or beat trafficked girls when the latter do not respect their madam's will.

⁸⁰ Another very dangerous moment for the Nigerian trafficked woman is when she decides to elude the authority of her madam without, or even after, having paid off the debt. It happens especially thanks to the help of a client or social service providers: it is a crucial moment as the woman may experience the madam's revenge. A number of news stories in the Italian press reported physical assaults against Nigerian prostitutes that ended with the violent death of the victim.

A higher level of violence is generally used by pimps and madam when women have just started to work in the street; at that moment, the madam obliges newcomers to do very long work shifts. These women have no chance to satisfy their basic needs and usually suffer of sleep deprivation. This particular device serves the specific purpose of weakening women both in a physical and a psychological level. All these constrictions are aimed at not giving newcomers any time to think about what they are living on or how they can react against (Maragnani & Aikpitanyi, 2007). The pressing control of the madam over her victims continue also when women are in their working place.

This massive control makes trafficked women always afraid of speaking with people who are not paying clients, especially with police officers or social workers (Pisoni et al 2008). All the reported devices, serve the finale objective to socially isolate trafficked women: in fact, the higher the degree of social isolation of trafficked women exploited in commercial sex work, the harder it is to free themselves from the trafficking chains (Bernardotti, 2007; Gargano et altr., 2009, Pisoni et altr., 2008).

“Nigerian girls do no trust in people because they have been betrayed by every one they knew... they are actually surrounded by people who make violence against them. (...) The girls are extremely careful on what they say because they know that there will be always somebody who will try to betray, abuse or hurt them” (Interview no. 21).

In order to keep women under control, the madam usually develops several strategies ranging from a false friendship with her victims to the use of coercive means. Madams use one or the other strategy (or both of them) depending on circumstances and based on the way trafficked women react to their slavery conditions. What is clear is that the madam know the importance of her role in the life of her trafficked women and makes a profitable usage of such a position of advantage: for the newcomers, indeed, the madam represents both the reference point to understand Italian cultural codes and the future guarantor for a career in the business of the THB. Concerning this last point, the madam uses her personal story of success to fascinate the new girls and lead them to accept all the abuses (in view of a future better life). This strategy is made possible because of the dual role that madams play in the THB: she is usually a former trafficked woman who made trafficking her own business. Aware of this particular position, madam can behave in a tolerant and assertive ways to her victims just with the aim at achieving their free collaboration: for instance, the madam may demonstrate to be sympathetic with her

trafficked women's poor living conditions on the ground that she has already experienced the same troubles in her past. In conclusion, through a false friendship, the madam enforces her authority over trafficked women:

“The madam is a fundamental actor of trafficking. The madam is the reference point of the trafficked girl that is alone when arrives. At the beginning, the madam receives her girl in a friendly way and builds with her a relationship based on trust. Then, such a relation becomes for the girl a kind of binding bond. Slowly, the madam becomes her persecutor” (Interview no. 19).

As stated in the words of the informants, the madam tends to create for her trafficked woman a living condition based on fear through some consolidated devices that usually are:

- The madam instils in her women the terror of being repatriated by Italian law enforcement agencies;
- The madam threatens trafficked women’s families or, more simply, tell trafficked women that she will do some harm to their family;
- The madam obliges women to undergo voodoo rites.

As reported in the victims' accounts, all these mechanisms contribute to the marginalisation of the women in the host society; all women efforts will be focused on paying off their debts (UNICRI, 2010; Maragnani & Aikpitanyi, 2007; Prina, 2003): “I could not flee because I did not know anyone and did not know the language. C. [the madam] reminded me that I had to repay my loan and that the time had come for starting to pay back” (quoted in UNICRI, 2010, case O.O).

Also the lifestyle that Nigerian women conduct in Italy facilitate their social isolation; once arrived in Italy, Nigerian women share the same flat or room and continue to live exactly as they did in the original country⁸¹. They develop social interactions only with fellow citizens (who are usually more or less involved in the illicit trade) or attend African Churches. Living in such a closed cultural context, trafficked Nigerian women have little or no chance to know Italian culture or its lifestyle.

⁸¹Several empirical studies (Bernardotti 2007, DNA 2012) point out a certain tendency of this national group to constitute a separated national community from mainstream Italian society.

5.1.1 *The trafficking chains: The debt, the native family and the illegal judicial status*

After having analysed forms of coercion and violence that women forced into prostitution suffer, some questions could arise: *Why do not trafficked women try to escape from their persecutors? Why do they prostitute themselves for their traffickers and then, after having paid off their debt, for themselves?*

A possible answer to these questions has been found in the state of vulnerability and the consequent social isolation lived by the victims in the destination country. Analysing more deeply what socio-cultural characteristics that contribute to keep Nigerian women linked to the commercial sex market, the following three elements stand out as the most relevant ones: (1) the debt, (2) the origin family and (3) their illegal judicial status.

(1) *The debt.* The debt is an amount of money that the trafficked woman has promised to pay back to her madam for travelling expenses and the security of a job in the destination country. The total amount of the debt usually varies according to the type of travel performed (by land or air) and to other taxes that madams or traffickers add discretionary to the total amount. For instance, a refusal of the trafficked woman to prostitute herself can increase her debt, as well as buying clothes and food or the rent of the woman's working place (known as *joint*):

“Every ten days, I had to hand in all the money to the madam and also add some monthly expenses: 150 euros for housing, 50 for food, 150 for the piece of the street where I worked! I was beaten many times, even with a belt, because the money was not enough” (“Message of Hope,” quoted in Giaretta 2007: 31).

The madam penalises her victims in arbitrary way: “you answered me in a bad way: pay 500 euro more”; “you did not act as I asked you: 200 euro”; “you have the phone number of someone that I do not know: 100 euro” (Interview no. 23).

Before leaving Nigeria, women are obliged to accept a legal contract with a strong binding nature where the total amount of the debt and their working conditions are not really defined. The debt usually exercises a strong psychological pressure over the trafficked Nigerian women because it is usually agreed under religious vows performed by voodoo and juju rituals (see Chapter III). In this way, these Nigerian spiritual traditions serve the trafficker's interests, making women more easy to subjugate:

“In May 2004, the defendant, Constance Omorui, came to a shrine where the second witness, Omoruyi Idemudia, served as a native doctor. The defendant informed him that two girls were to take an oath in the shrine. The second witness asked the two girls whether they knew where the defendant was taking them and for what purpose. They answered that they knew that the defendant was taking them to Italy for the purpose of prostitution and they would pay EUR 50,000 in Italy. The girls took an oath not to run away from their madam and to pay her the money” (quoted by UNDOC database, 2006, Attorney General of the Federation vs. Constance Omoruyi).

“The debt has a contract value. The voodoo rite hallows the contract. It means that the contract is made official through a religious rite” (Interview no. 23).

Voodoo is a sanctified agreement which binds the contracting parties both at a material and a spiritual level. During voodoo rituals, indeed, the *baba-loa* — the local priest or doctor — invokes gods as witnesses of the pact and collects some very personal objects of the woman who takes the oath (such as pubic hairs or fingernails): these objects will be returned to the woman only when her debt is settled, otherwise, the objects will be used to harm her through the actions of evil spirits (Interview no. 24). Through such traditional rite, the madam gets a total control over woman who has undergone the voodoo ritual. Such a form of control differs from that used against trafficked girls coming from Western cultures and, in several aspects, is more pervasive and intensive one:

“Nigerian women are less segregated than women of other nationalities' victims of trafficking. Nigerian woman's loyalty to the madam is due to a form of cultural conditioning, based on the voodoo, that makes her under control for the rest of the life. It is a more devious form of blackmail” (Interview no. 15).

Nigerian traffickers do not really need an apparent check over girls as their obedience is automatically guaranteed by the duty to maintain the tight pact with the spirits and the community, the interruption of which is a source of dishonour and disgrace (Prina, 2003, 89).

Through voodoo, trafficked women find their own explanation for all the harm they experience in Italian streets: they consider violence they suffer as the punishment of spirits⁸² for not having complying with the voodoo pact: “Many girls have gone mad. If

⁸² In order to understand the women's trust in voodoo, it must be acknowledged that the recent adhesion of the majority of Nigerian people to Catholic and Protestant religions has not resulted in a loss of local traditional myths and beliefs which have been adapted to the new modern society and to Christian practices (Pilotto, 2009). African people trust both in voodoo rituals and official religions on two different parallel levels (Pilotto, 2005, Prina, 2003).

you stand on a street for 12, even 20 hours, you would also go mad. But when this happens, girls think it's juju that is punishing them for what they have done" (quoted in interview with Aikpitanyi, in Van Eisedel & Caroline Pare, *People and Power*, 2013).

(2) *The family of origin.* The family of origin of a trafficked woman can hold an important role in obliging woman to enter the trafficking business and work in the sex market. In the eyes of the majority of the Nigerians, trafficked girls have a moral duty to help their family members because they have had the chance to escape the poverty of their native country (Interview no. 25).

The authority exercised by parents over their daughter can be fully appreciated in the light of two main characteristics of Nigerian society and culture: (a) the female role within the family and (b) the importance of kinship and blood ties in Nigerian communities.

Even though the Nigerian society has a strong patriarchal structure, women are often charged to guarantee the family's survival. This entails in turn that women and girls are more readily sacrificed for the family's well-being: "Young girls are brought up with the idea that they must migrate in order to improve the family's living conditions and, once they are 16 or 17 years old they are encouraged to leave and are delivered into the hands of the madam/sponsor" (Interview no. 6, quoted in UNICRI 2010).

Showing a strong sense of duty and devotion for the family, Nigerian women often send home most of their income and continue to work in prostitution also after they have settled their debts. They want to guarantee a sufficient living standard for their family members:

"With this job I have made possible for all my brothers to study and I have supported my mother, so I am proud of being a prostitute" (quoted by Kennedy and Nicotri, 1999: 32).

"I promised to pay so I can't run way. ... You must pay. It is an agreement. ... Yeah, it is too much dangerous because I don't want my family to suffer, because I love them so much. I don't want them to stress. Let me say, I carry the cross for them just like Jesus Christ" (quoted by Van Eisedel & Caroline Pare, 2013, interview with a Nigerian street prostitute working on a Domitian street).

In addition to the family attachment, trafficked woman can also be indebted to her parents for having financed her trafficking venture.

Some evidences of the nature of the control exercised by the native family on their trafficked daughter are provided by the following account of a Nigerian woman. This story clearly shows the psychological pressures put in place by the woman's relatives to convince her to send home her earnings:

“Each time I phoned home I knew that something bad had happened: My youngest brother had been in the hospital, my father had been fired and my mother was dying. I was shocked. It was a really hard time for me: For a long time, I had been sending home a lot of money but my debts had increased and were much higher than when I had left Africa. ... Then a friend who works as a hairdresser went to see her parents who live near my parents: When she came back, she told me that everybody in my family was fine and that my father had bought a car” (Aikpitany, 2011: 103).

In this case, the trafficked daughter was the main source of income for her relatives who had become her exploiters. In this way, the trafficked daughter finds herself doubly subjugated: by the family from one side and the madam, on the other side.

Concerning family role in enhance trafficking, several studies (Aghatise, 2007; Okojie, 2009; Prina, 2003) note how sending daughters abroad has become a status symbol in Nigerian families. In fact, the economic well-being that families with a trafficked daughter achieve within their community encourages other parents to sell daughters to traffickers and madams. In Nigerian society, therefore, trafficking represents a chance at financial security not only for the woman victim but also for her family which hopes to improve its living standard with the aid of the trafficked female child.

As this short analysis indicates, the so-called push factors that compel migration, including harsh living conditions, clarify why certain social dynamics occur.

(3) *The illegal judicial status.* The women lured into trafficking and into commercial sex work in Italy are largely illegal and thus their access to civil rights and social services is often extremely limited. As noticed by Augustin (2005), in the majority of cases, these women do not have permission to work at any job but rather they possess false documents, tourist visas, or permission to work at something specific that has been stamped in their passports. It is clear that the possession, or not, of legal “papers” is an extremely important factor from the point of view of the migrants: it means the chance for an equal standing before the law enforcement system of the destination country, which is obliged to provide forms of social assistance for foreigner citizens:

“The health care service was good, but my document are expired now. So I can not do any kind of tests. I should renew all my documents, but somebody told me that I have to wait. I do not know why. When you renew the permit, also you must renew a health card. I do not know when it will happen” (interview no.11).

From another side, the illegal position of trafficked women is used by their traffickers as a tool to increase victims’ dependency:

“The madam continued to instill fear in me, reminding me of the pact that had been made with the voodoo ritual. ... She also cautioned me with regards to my illegal status; that is a person who is not free and who, if stopped by the police, risked being arrested and then deported. The other girls didn’t rebel for the same reason” (quoted in Giaretta 2009: 63).

The illegal status is also one of the main reasons women exploited into prostitution refuse to denounce traffickers’ violent behaviours or to come into contact with social workers providing forms of assistance: Nigerian women generally think that Italian law enforcement agencies want to send back them to Nigeria because of their irregular position.

As matter of facts, social service providers report that Nigerian women who are affected by some serious diseases avoid to go to the hospital until their lives are seriously in danger: they show fear of being denounced by health workers and deported to their origin country (Pisoni, 2008; BeFree, 2009; Aikpitanyi, 2007).

This behaviour demonstrates that trafficked women usually ignore their right to state protection and they tend to regard all Italian officers as individuals who want just to harm them. Such a negative feeling against Italian institutions and generally towards the Italians are fostered by two main elements: (a) the psychological conditioning exercised by the madam who strengthens the women’s bias against Italian police and law enforcement system); (b) the clear prejudice of Italian people against Nigerian national group.

The condition of illegal migrant lived by the vast majority of Nigerian trafficked women therefore enhance the social gap with madams - who usually have legal residence permits - and limits the women’s chances to escape from trafficking and prostitution.

5.2 On the Street as an Independent Prostitute

Regarding the figure of the female offender in trafficking, Siegel (2011) has identified three main categories based on the women's degree of independence in their management of the trafficking business and their relationships with male accomplices: (a) the supporters; (b) the partners in crime and (c) the madams.

In reference to Siegel's theory, in the following paragraphs, the life stories of several trafficked women are analyzed. The main purpose of the analysis is to describe the crucial phases, or steps, through which the women move from the lowest hierarchical position in the trafficking business (the trafficked woman) to the highest position (the madam).

As already reported, the madams play an important role in the stage of exploitation of trafficked women, and some of them hold a leadership position in the trafficking business by supervising "every link in the prostitution chain, from recruiting new girls in Africa to putting them to work in brothels" (Siegel 2011). A certain number of these current madams were trafficked women in the past that moved from a condition of slavery to becoming the trafficking entrepreneurs. The life stories analyzed here demonstrate how such a vertical mobility may occur. In the following account, a Nigerian woman named Debby explains how and why she became a madam:

I had paid off my debts and gave a party. I made a gift to my maman, who had been very good to me. The following day, everything went back to normal: the rent, the food, the clothes, the family in Africa. I needed money, and I had no identity documents nor a job. I only had my clients, and I started prostituting myself again. Then, the maman suggested I use my income to finance the journey of a girl to Italy, who would then work for me... I became a maman (Aikpitanyi 2010: 103).

This anecdotal evidence shows that the most critical time for the trafficked woman was when she cleared her debts. At that moment, she was theoretically free to leave the trade. When the woman decided to become a voluntary prostitute with the aim of earning money to recruit new girls for the business instead of leaving, she climbed the first step of an illegal career ladder.

This step is the starting point of the vertical mobility process, as Siegel defines it, and this step indicates that the formerly trafficked woman has changed her *status* within the criminal network.

In the account reported above, it is evident that the madam of the trafficked woman played an important role in the moving of the former victim to the organizational side of the trafficking business. In this regard, it must be considered that the madam is far from being just an exploiter of the women; the madam is also the trafficked women's protector who teaches the women how to behave to enter the lucrative business. "There are many pimps that when you [the trafficked woman] have paid the debt they tell you 'Now you have to find your own money to do something in Nigeria'"(quoted in Prina 2003: 81).

The process driving trafficked woman to become a partner in crime typically starts with a few small benefit that the madam allows for her girl in exchange for some additional tasks:

The madam advances the position of a trafficked girl giving her some additional task. The madam tell the girl: 'Now you collect the money that the other trafficked women gain in the street, and I make you a discount on your debt'" (Interview no.21).

When the girl has almost finished paying off her debt, the madam says her: 'I see that you have got a good head for business. I will help you to bring a girl here'. In this way, the girl becomes an accomplice of the organization. (Interview no.24).

Women's stories show that the trafficked women who gain their madams' trust are more easily included in the trafficking business (Aikpitanyi 2011; Maragnani and Aikpitanyi 2006); there are in fact a number of female figures who help the madam in her commitments, especially in overseeing trafficked girls' movements (e.g., the female guardians⁸³) or collecting their periodical payments: "She [in the story she is called C.] said that she only was the cashier of the maman that lived in Nigeria and that she did not want troubles. We had to give her the 35,000 euro we agreed to before the journey; no further negotiations could take place" (quoted in UNICRI, 2010).

The madam's favourite is a typical example of a trafficked woman who has come to terms with the trafficking system. The madam chooses her favourite primarily for her loyalty and for her success in earning money through her work. Being the madam's personal assistant and the other girls' warden are the two main tasks of the madam's favourite. As a result of the duty of overseeing the girls on behalf of her madam, the favourite achieves a higher status than the other prostitutes, even though she must pay

⁸³ The guardian is the madam's favourite or a woman who has already extinguished her debt and is

off her debts before entering the trafficking business. The favourite generally demonstrates a greater acceptance of the rules of trafficking and a high degree of concurrence in the business's inherent violence and subjugation.

From a legal point of view, the madam's favourite must be still regarded as a trafficking victim because what she does is carried out under duress and she cannot act for herself. The former trafficked woman becomes an independent sex worker only when she acts neither in a state of vulnerability or manifest subjugation (from interview no. 23).

In regard to the state of vulnerability of the women who experienced trafficking, the reasons why some of the women tend to resort to their madams to enter into the trafficking business must be carefully highlighted. Such reasons appear clearly in the Debby's story, where the woman claimed that after she paid off all her debts she did not have any other chance for survival than continuing to prostitute herself.

As a consequence of the long exploitation period, many Nigerian women often find themselves socially isolated and completely deprived of any means necessary to begin a normal life. At this stage, their only option is to bond with the madams. Such conditions of deep social isolation and poverty make it easy for the former trafficked women to be addicted to the system:

The transition process is gradual. It happens because the woman is so inured to the system that she is no longer able to complain. The woman develops a deep trust in her madam. The madam returns the faith of the woman by giving her the responsibility to control the other women. If this task is carried out faithfully and effectively, the woman is rewarded. (Interview no.23)

Trafficked women are often consumed physically and psychologically. These women do not recognize any moral value and are unable to conduct a normal life. In these cases, women usually become pimps. (...). It is very easy for women to fall into the trap and accept to become a partner in crime because it is basically the only chance to have a comfortable life. The bond with their madams is based on the expectation of a future better life. Thus, the transition from victim to persecutor is easy to make (Interview no.21).

As the reported empirical evidences show, during their exploitation period, the women are typically subjected to a massive conditioning that drives them to consider prostitution and coercion as common tools to achieve economic success. In the following taped conversation, Eva, a formerly trafficked girl who was working as a

collecting the money to buy a girl and to start herself working as a madam.

prostitute, advises Madam Esther on how voodoo should be performed on a newly arrived trafficked girl:

Esther [the madam] asked Eva: “Should we do the magic to the workplace or the girl?” and Eva answered: “You know... the magic on the workplace has been done...the magic on the girl is very important...so she will be safe from the police and she will have many men” (...). The first time I came to Italy, I brought some sand with me from Nigeria so that I could do the magic against the police. You have to do the same for Mary” (Ordinary Court of Naples, Court of Assizes, Omofona Priscilla vs. Italy, 2010: 70).

This conversation describes how the formerly trafficked woman approved of using the psychological mechanisms of subjugation applied by the madam. Eva's consent is partially a result of her cultural background, where voodoo is viewed as a religious ritual aimed at ensuring the safety of individuals. In the perspective of a Nigerian woman who intends to enter the trafficking industry, the voodoo and the madam guarantee safety and protection, and the police and the law enforcement system of the destination countries are regarded threats.

Such a psychological acceptance of the mechanisms of trafficking is a main factor that drives trafficked persons to become supporters and partners in crime over time, even when they are still obliged to prostitute themselves. Trafficked individuals who consent to the system prevent the break-up of the trafficking chain (DNA 2012).

The findings on the transfer of former trafficked women towards the organisational side of trafficking can be reported in Table 3.2.1 (below). This shows two intermediate cases where characters populate the grey area: the madam's favourite and the independent prostitute.

When women hold those roles in THB several difficulties arise in understanding whether, or not, they act in an independent way. In front of this issue, the self-determination represents a relevant element in order to identify the position hold by individuals in THB industry.

Finally, the reported case of intermediate roles (i.e., the madam's favourite and the independent prostitute) demonstrates two striking characteristics of Nigerian trafficking:

- *The relationship between a madam and her prostitute is ambiguous and is mostly based on the multiple roles played by the madam (where she is both the woman's persecutor and her protector);*
- *The recommendations provided by the maman automatically extends the trafficking business by advancing the ‘career’ of a former victim.*

<i>No self determination</i>	VICTIMS	People who live a status of vulnerability, including the serious socio-economic conditions in the origin country	Coerced Threaned Deceived
<i>Supposed no self determination</i> - Women s’ action are the result of other people. Therefore, she is not really responsible for the offences she commits; - difficulties to define if women collaborate with the clear intent to move toward the organisational side of trafficking	Madam’s favourite	Vulnerable people, including the serious socio-economic conditions in the origin country	She is coerced or threatened or deceived by her madam but exercises a “violent” control over other trafficked women on behalf of her madam
<i>Supposed self determination</i> - difficulties to define whether woman is not living a condition of vulnerability	Independent Prostitute	Woman can continue to live in a condition of psychological dependency from their traffickers Woman prostituting herself because she thinks not to have other chances of survival	Intent to bring in Italy a women to exploit her work
<i>Self determination</i>	OFFENDER	Organised in criminal network	Intent to exploit the labour of other through the means of coercion, threat and deception

Table 3.2.1

5.3 On the Street as a Madam

The two following paragraphs analyse two possible positions that the madams hold in the trafficking business: (1) leader of the trafficking business or (2) vehicle of other actors who manage the business from afar.

Taking into account this distinction, the paragraph is divided into two main sections. In the first part, the figure of the madam as a leader of the business is described: it focuses on the madam's profile, the locations from where the madams manage their business and their relationships with the other actors playing a role in the three typical phases of the trafficking: 1. recruiting, 2. transferring and 3. exploitation (see UN Trafficking Protocol, Chapter I).

The second section analyses the life stories of some madams forced to enter the trafficking business by other individuals involved in the THB: these stories represent unusual cases of the typical leadership madam's role. In such a case the madam is regarded as an intermediate actor within victim/persecutor model.

The Nigerian madams working in the business of bringing women to the Italian sex market are often former illegal migrants arrived in Italy in the '80s and '90s. In that period, Nigerian women and their male sponsors discovered the possibility of earning money through the prostitution in European countries, and they made it a consolidated business over time:

“The madams are definitely former victims of trafficking who decided to do some profits through trafficking. The business has ensured them better living standards” (Interview no. 19).

“The madams are prostitutes who made career.... the madam was born poor and has became rich through trafficking; from an African point of view, trafficking represents their story of emancipation from the poverty” (Interview no. 17).

“After suffering the violence of the trafficking process, the girls themselves become madams” (Interview no. 23).

In this regard, Moscarelli (IOM representative in the legal office) claims that the former trafficked woman can be rightly regarded as a criminal when she starts to exploit the work of another person: at that point, the woman takes part in the trafficking offence and she becomes a partner in crime (Interview no. 16).

Trying to draw the madam's profile, it can be stated that current madam have achieved a

certain level of knowledge of Italian cultural background and legal system. Thus, contrary to trafficked women (who live in an illegal judicial position), the madams are usually legal migrants provided with a regular permit or even with Italian citizenship. The madams look to be integrated with the host society and are often married to Italian men:

“I knew many Nigerian madams: in the past they were often ignorant, greedy and very violent women but now many madams apparently have a normal life. They are married with Italians who may not know about the business of their wives. They are normal mothers and wives who, however, are embarked on the exploitation of sex work” (Interview no. 22).

As reported in the account, the modern madams avoid physical coercion and have come to terms with an Italian lifestyle.

Generally madams are older than their trafficked women, around 30 or 40 years old and, contrary to the prostitutes, look prosperous and healthy.

According to other social service providers, a typical madam’s behaviour is to make very clear her high social status. They behave in a overblown manner, by wearing expensive clothes or buying luxury items:

“You can easily recognise a madam from her behaviours and manners...or more simply by her clothes. The madam usually wears very expensive glasses or bags brand” (Interview no. 17).

“Ms A. is a real madam. You can tell from the way she talks and behaves, from the clothes she wears ... from how everybody looks at her and respects her, she is a very powerful woman. And very, very rich” (quoted in Siegel 2011).

The madam’s emphasis on their own richness serve the scope to motivate trafficked women and to stress the madam’s authority over all actors involved in THB industry. As Siegel notes, this way of presenting themselves has its effects with regard to “reliability, acceptance, and respect, especially when the madam also had men working for them” (Siegel, 2011).

By this brief analysis, it is evident that the madam’s authority over her trafficked women is strengthened by two main elements: 1. her legal judicial status and 2. her economic wealth.

The relevance of this last factor can be fully understood in the light of modern Nigerian culture that strongly stresses the importance of gaining a Western wealth level through

any feasible means: “When you have money is not important how you get it, or if you gained it prostituting yourself to Italian white men. You have money and you can do whatever” (Interview no. 13).

According to some commentators, this cultural stress on wealth at any cost is one of the effects of those processes of modernisation and globalisation that has affected Nigeria in recent years (Carling, 2005; Lawal, 2011). This culture justifies in the eyes of the majority of Nigerians the nature of the business promoted by the madams and further legitimates madams’ role and authority in Nigerian society.

In the Nigerian female trafficking business, the madam may play a key role in the management of the trade, from supervising every link in the prostitution chain⁸⁴ to recruiting new girls in Africa or putting them to work in street prostitution” (Siegel, 2011). As the accounts of Aikpitanyi report: “Madams are the key. They are the main actors in this exploitation. They force girls into prostitution and ask for money to repay the debt. They work with ‘brothers’; men who are in charge of physically trafficking the girls” (Aikpitanyi 2012: 101).

Contrary to this representation of an organisational structure of the THB industry based on the madam’s role, Mancini has noticed that the madam plays relevant functions mainly in the final phase of victims’ exploitation whereas she does not hold a leadership in the management of the whole business. Generally, it can be stated that the highest positions in the organisational ladder of the trade are covered by male actors (UNICRI, 2010). However, according to several eyewitness’ accounts, the madam can appear in different stages of the trade: it depends from the size of the criminal group.

In many cases, in the phase of recruiting new girls, the madam plays the role of the sponsor; i.e., the person who finances the journey⁸⁵ and stipulates the agreement with the girl by using voodoo rituals (performed by a traditional priest). The sponsor and the madam who actually exploit the girls in the destination country can be therefore two

⁸⁴ As defined in the UN Trafficking Protocol (Charter I), the trafficking in human beings is characterised by three main phases: (1) the recruitment of victims, (2) their transfer, and (3) their exploitation in labour or on the sex market.

⁸⁵ The travel costs range from US\$500 to US\$2,000 for documents and US\$8,000 to US\$12,000. However, the madam usually charges her victims much higher prices and on arrival may request as much as US\$80,000.

different individuals who share the final profits. In such a case, the madam in Italy is called *Italian madam* and her degree of autonomy from Nigerian sponsor depends on the circumstances: several studies have pointed out an increasing number of *Italian madams* working for a female sponsor that manages all the business from Nigeria (Interview no. 23). Contrary, other accounts show that the *Italian madam* tends to buy her girls from the sponsor and to work independently (Carchedi & Bernardotti, 2007).

The second phase of trafficking (the transfer of victims) is often performed by males, known as trolleys or italos, who work for mamans or sponsors. The transfer is a typical male job for the high risk that it involves, such as crossing the desert or the borders of Arab and Islamic countries (it is clear that a male driver has better chances to success). In the trafficking business performed on a very small scale (with one or two members), however, the madam travel herself with her girls, by plane and stopping just one or two times.

Finally, concerning the exploitation phase, the madam manages brothels (in case of indoor prostitution) or the trafficked girls' street work. When the madam needs to use coercion in order to better establish her authority over reticent women, she relies on Nigerian gangs specialised in such work (Carling, 2005)⁸⁶.

Concerning to this last phase, recently, madams show to avoid their direct exposure: they prefer to use a girl, often a minor⁸⁷, designated in overseeing the other trafficked women on their behalf. In such cases, the madam lives far from the working place of her trafficked girls (in another town or even in Nigeria). Through this strategy, the madams attempt to hide their key role in the business and thus to be less traceable as real persecutors of women exploited in the sex market (from interview no. 18). Contrary to this low profile strategy, some madams continue to be directly involved in the sexual exploitation and to receive themselves the clients as sex workers (even when they have other girls working for them): "I [the madam] set a personal example to the girls who work for me. Some clients deserve special attention, and when I am around the whole evening, why not join in the action?" (Oude Breuil et al 2011).

⁸⁶ The main collaborators or accomplices of the madam who oversees the operation are the sponsor and traditional priest (in the recruitment phase), the trolley or italos (in the transfer), and the black's boys (for the exploitation of girls).

⁸⁷ Madams choose minor girls because these latter do not face severe penalties when accused of promoting forced prostitution.

Going beyond THB industry, madams invest their money also in legal sectors; as a matter of fact, in several Italian city centres (Torino or Genova) a number of little shops, especially hairdresser's boutiques, are managed by Nigerians. These shops usually provide services and merchandises (e.g., ethnic viands) requested by African people.

A large amount of profit coming from trafficking is re-invested by madams and pimps as remittances in Nigeria for important business ventures: according to Friedel, the remittances of madams have represented a kind of structural aid for the country and especially in Benin City whole town districts have been built through such type of fund (from interview no.15). In accordance with this view, Aikpitanyi and Lawal state that the madams' remittance have financed Benin City University and the local public transport service (Lawal, 2011). Such a strategic importance of madams' remittances in the growth of the country explains why Nigerian law enforcement has been reluctant to take an effective action against THB (from interview no. 15).

Analysing all madams' tasks, it is possible to state that they are both main sponsors or key contact for the Nigerians who want to live their country and the main providers of services for Nigerians living outside the country.

5.3.1 Unusual Cases of Madams

As previously mentioned, a madam can be a past trafficked woman who entered in the trafficking system. Because a madam may once have been a victim herself, she inhabits the contradictory position of having experienced the harsh living conditions and the day-to-day problems of trafficked women, and now contributing to such conditions and problems. The madam's role becomes even more ambivalent when she has not completely overcome the state of victimization. Several life stories (reported by Isoke Aikpitanyi, a former trafficking victim) are peculiar cases in which the madam is simultaneously victim and persecutor because she is herself exploited and coerced by others. In such cases, the madam is not so much the leader of a criminal group that is involved in trafficking but a tool used by others to perform criminal acts. When this occurs the madam can be included among those actors who populate the grey area of the trafficking offence (box *f* in the table below).

		Coercion		
		use coercion	no use coercion	Subject to coercion
Exploitation	Volunteer Prostitution	Madam a)	Prostitute b)	Prostitute* c)
	Forced prostitution	Madam's favourite* d)	Victim e)	Victim Madam* f)
	No prostitution	Madam g)	GATE h)	Victim i)

In Isoke Aikpitanyi's mentioned collection of stories of Nigerian women who experienced trafficking, two stories of Nigerian madams stand out. The first is the story of a woman named Joan, who married an Italian after a period of exploitation as a street prostitute. After the wedding, Joan's native family continued asking her to send money to them, as she had done when she prostituted herself. To satisfy the insistent requests of her family, Joan tried to traffic a Nigerian girl. This attempt ended in her arrest and imprisonment. In the second account, a trafficked girl recounts the life story of her madam, who was known as Patience:

She [the trafficked girl] informed me [Isoke Aikpitanyi] that Patience was her maman and that all the money ended up in the hands of Patience's father. Aided by her husband, Patience looked after some girls on behalf of her father, but the profits went to the two men only (Aikpitanyi 2010: 103).

In the end, Patience was killed by her husband because she refused to prostitute herself. In clear contrast with the figure of madam analyzed in the previous paragraphs, these testimonies demonstrate that the madam can be influenced or even forced into engaging in the trafficking business. In particular, Patience's story describes a highly peculiar situation for a madam. Similar to her trafficked women, she is exploited and coerced into prostitution through physical and psychological violence. This new figure of madam enslaved by other individuals makes much more evident the importance to carefully analyze each single experience of trafficking in order to highlight the

relationships between the victims and offenders. In both of these stories, the women's relatives play an important role in conditioning their young female kin to entering the trafficking business.

5.5 Considerations

The difficulties in accurately defining the dividing lines between the characters involved in Nigerian trafficking have been analysed. The vertical mobility of roles and a criminal system supported by formerly trafficked victims have been revealed as the most important factors that delimit a large grey area. That is, the characters involved in trafficking may inhabit intermediate positions between the two opposing figures of victim and perpetrator, which is why it is difficult to understand when characters act as independent agents or, in contrast, are compelled by social obligations or other individuals (such as parents or husbands).

In this chapter, the elements compelling trafficked women to chose prostitution and trafficking as a means of survival have been highlighted: i.e., the voodoo and juju rituals, the family of origin, and the illegal judicial status.

All these factors serve to isolate the victims and make it difficult for them to contact the officers (police and social services officers) who can provide help. Such a state of isolation and subjugation has been defined as the main reason trafficked woman are not able to react to their persecutor and decide to continue to prostitute themselves after having settled the debt.

Relating the vertical mobility of Nigerian women inside the trafficking career ladder, two specific grey positions have been analysed: the madam's favourite and some cases in which madams were coerced to enter the trafficking business. The madam's favourite is a trafficked woman who helps the madam manage her business, thereby achieving a higher status than the other trafficked women. In the analysis of the figure of the favourite, the trafficked women's adoption of the rules and objectives of the trafficking business stands out as the most important elements that prevent trafficked women from breaking with traffickers.

The two cases of madams who were coerced to enter the trafficking business clearly indicate that the Nigerian trafficking system derives its continuity and strength from a *modus operandi* that does not allow the trafficked women to leave the system. Thus, the victimisation of the trafficked woman may not end with the payment of the debt to the traffickers. As Patience's case clearly demonstrates, for women lured into trafficking, slavery can become a permanent condition.

Using once again Table 3.2.1, a new grey area can be drawn, including those madams forced by other individuals to engage in THB.

<i>No self determination</i>	VICTIMS	People who live a status of vulnerability, including the serious socio-economic conditions in the origin country	Coerced Threatened Deceived
<i>Supposed no self determination</i> - Women's actions are the result of other people. Therefore, she is not really responsible for the offences she commits; - difficulties to define if women collaborate with the clear intent to move toward the organisational side of trafficking	Madam's favourite	Vulnerable people, including the serious socio-economic conditions in the origin country	She is coerced or threatened or deceived by her madam but exercises a "violent" control over other trafficked women on behalf of her madam
<i>Supposed self determination</i> - difficulties to define whether woman is not living a condition of vulnerability	Independent Prostitute	Woman can continue to live in a condition of psychological dependency from their traffickers Woman prostituting herself because she thinks not to have other chances of survival	Intent to bring in Italy a woman to exploit her work
<i>Self determination</i>	OFFENDER	Organised in criminal network	Intent to exploit the labour of others through the means of coercion, threat and deception
<i>Supposed self determination</i>	Madam forced by other individuals or organised groups	Organised in criminal network	She exploits the work of other people by coercion, threat and deception. She is exploited and forced by others

CONCLUSIONS

Based on an ethnographic methodological framework, this research has highlighted the importance to read Nigerian THB industry by new approaches which focus on *grey areas*. Following this purpose, any *Manichean* thinking related to Nigerian trafficking phenomenon has been abandoned because dichotomy approaches underestimate its main characteristic: that is, a criminal model that leads its former victims to take an active part in a complex criminal plan.

As a consequence of such a *modus operandi* the characters involved in trafficking hold intermediate positions between the two opposing figures of victim and perpetrator. The intermediate positions explain why it is difficult to understand when individuals act as independent agents or are compelled by other persons; This elucidates why sharp dividing lines on THB phenomenon are not easy to be drawn.

In order to classify the different roles that Nigerian women hold in the THB offence, the author has applied to the phenomenon the concept of *grey area*. This term was originally coined by the Jewish writer Primo Levi: he used the words “grey zone” to speak about a group of prisoners who helped the Nazi guards operate the concentration camp. In return for their assistance, the prisoner-officers, as Levi named them, achieved a higher social status than the other prisoners. Thus, their behaviour came to resemble that of the Nazi guards because they used violence against the other Jews and even killed them. The prisoner-officers became persecutors, even though they themselves were imprisoned in the camp.

Like Levi’s prisoner-officers, once lured into the illicit trade, Nigerian women are exposed to a pervasive psychological conditioning through which the traffickers persuade them to accept their predicament. That is, the erstwhile victims are driven to become partners in crime and independent agents over time. Such vertical mobility upon the trafficking career ladder explains why some of these women hold middle positions among the two opposing figures of victim and persecutor.

In the case of Nigerian trafficking, the grey zone is populated by those individuals who were originally lured into the trafficking and now contribute to operating the business on different levels and in different ways, although they are still forced to work under slavery-like conditions by their traffickers.

The concept of grey area and intermediate positions provide, therefore, some new categories beyond those of victim and offender, and are useful to answer the research question of this paper:

- *How do the former trafficked women move from the lowest position of the trafficking hierarchy to gain the role of entrepreneur of the business?*

On the basis of the data gathered by the interviewees, a criminal model established on three main organisational levels has been ascertained; the headquarters of the organisation is placed in Nigeria, where the victims are recruited. Then, the organisation branches out in business units which provide logistical support for the transport of the victims and their exploitation in the trafficking destination countries (Carchedi et al. 2007; Mancini 2009). The cells in Italy are responsible for the reception of the victims and the final exploitation in the local sex market. These criminal units are managed by businesswomen, the *madams* or *mamans*, who are supported in the execution of their tasks by their partners/procurers, or other male figures (such as the *black boy*). These latter are responsible for intimidating the trafficked women and controlling the working place of prostitutes.

In the Nigerian criminal model, as described by the respondents, three striking characteristics stand out:

- The female leadership is usually confined to the Nigerian cells in the destination countries, while the whole trafficking business is handled by male offenders. The possible madam action in the other trafficking steps (women's recruiting and transfer) is caused by mutual inter-exchange activities between the cells in Italy and the headquarters in Nigeria.
- An intercontinental net of criminal cells where each single local knot has got a certain degree of autonomy, while remaining tied to the group managing the business from Nigeria;

- A criminal organisation characterized both by an horizontal and a pyramidal structure; the cells collaborate each other in a horizontal plane and they are the "pawns" of a hierarchical organised crime group

Even though the researcher's informants live in different Italian towns, all them have reported the same striking characteristics in Nigerian criminality and *modus operandi* in the cells held by the madams. This finding suggests that Nigerian criminality reproduces in each place a criminal schema that is strengthened by an international net, thanks to which each single criminal knot is never isolated or separated by the headquarters in Nigeria.

After having highlighted the general structure of Nigerian criminal groups, a further focus on the internal structure of the cells in Italy has been argued. In order to analyse women's roles within the criminal cell, a double-entry table based on two relevant variables, i.e., the coercion and the exploitation (based on the definition of trafficking offence as provided by UN TIP Protocol), has been used. What comes out from this table is the career path of trafficked women when moving from victims' status to become madams. Based on the chances for individuals lured in the trade to self-determine their actions and lives, these following positions in the trafficking industry have been outlined:

The victim, whoever is lured in trafficking by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of a position of vulnerability or the receiving of payments or benefits to achieve his/her consent of being controlled by another person, for the purpose of exploitation (*No self determination*);

The Madam s' favourite is a trafficked woman who is coerced or threatened or deceived by her madam save for exercising a "violent" control over other trafficked women on behalf of her madam (*Supposed no self determination*);

Independent prostitute works for herself in the sex market with the intent of collecting enough money to bring other women in Italy and exploit their work (*Supposed self determination*);

Offender is whoever recruits, transports, transfers, harbours or receives a person by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve a person's consent, with the aim of exploiting the person (*self determination*);

The madam influenced or even forced by other individuals to enter trafficking business. In a case such as this, the madam is not the leader of the criminal cell but is a vehicle for somebody else's criminal actions. When the madam finds herself in this circumstance, she may be forced to continue to prostitute herself (*Supposed self determination*).

Thus, the study has highlighted three main characters who populate the *grey area* in the THB offence, i.e.: 1) the madam s' favourite; 2) the independent prostitutes; 3) the madam who is forced by others to partake in the business.

As stressed by the respondents, the above mentioned vertical mobility process begins when the madam encourages some of her trafficked women to start their own business by bringing themselves women in Italy. Basically, when a former trafficked woman becomes a prostitute, clearly aiming at earning money to recruit new girls for the business instead of leaving, she has climbed the first step of the illegal career ladder. This means, indeed, that the former trafficked woman has changed her status within the criminal network. She becomes a real partner in crime when she starts to exploit the work of another individual. At this point, this woman must be regarded as a offender of trafficking.

All the interviewees have emphasised such *a modus operandi* as a tricky and subtle strategy used by traffickers to keep their victims silent and to make them accomplices of the business over time:

“When the girl has almost finished paying, for example 5 thousand Euro, the *madam* says something like: « I see that you've got a good head for business. I'll help you bring a girl here ». This is before the girl has paid all the debt. In this way, the girl will not be able to report the *madam* in the future. She becomes an accomplice of the organization. The girl is made to take another oath that is she will not reveal anything. We tell the girls not to do this because it means they are the same as the *madams*”. (interview n.24).

“It happens because the woman is so inured to the system that she can not even complain anymore. Instead she develops a deep trust in her *madam*. The *madam* returns her faith by giving her responsibilities for control over other women. If these tasks are carried out faithfully and effectively, the woman is rewarded” (interview n.23).

The analysis has pointed out the reasons why Nigerian trafficked women regards this illicit trade as the only feasible career: i.e., (a) the poor living conditions and gender inequality in women's native country who cause them to seek a better living standard elsewhere and to migrate at all costs; (b) the psychological and symbolic control exercised by madam through the debt agreed in religious rituals (e.g. juju and voodoo rites), as well as the (c) trafficked women's illegal judicial status in the country of destination does not enable them to take legal actions.

After having experienced street prostitution, Nigerian women are so physically and psychological consumed to the point that it is very difficult for them to find a way to escape from the traffic chains. After the long periods of exploitation, what remains to trafficked woman is only the bond with her madam, who is often the only individual who assures her certain future earnings.

The *social milieu* where trafficked women inhabit after their arrival in Italy has to be added among the elements that play a key role in keeping them tied to the trafficking system. My experience as an observer in a Nigerian community, as well as the interviews, have highlighted the role of Nigerian communities and Brotherhoods in Italy in supporting the traffickers' business. These ethnic microcosms reproduce in the countries of destination some aspects of the Nigerian cultural background and networks: in such social settings, trafficked women are usually harnessed and kept under control of madams, pimps and traffickers. In fact, the leaders of these communities (e.g. Nigerian priests) encourage the trafficked victims to accept their role in the sex market, or even to adopt it as an ordinary tool to earn money.

In this regards, the respondents have outlined a new relevant trend in Nigerian criminality: that is, the decrease in the usage of physical violence perpetrated by traffickers towards their victims, in favour of more psychological and symbolic means of coercion (including the voodoo and juju rituals) The main consequences due to those new strategies and to less hierarchal relationships among the actors of Nigerian criminal cells are that:

- *The former trafficked girls are more easily led to take part in the trade as partners in crime;*
- *The grey areas in trafficking offences and the middle role are broadened.*

In conclusion, the main contribution of this research is to stress the complexity of the Nigerian trafficking phenomenon, highlighting a re-producing and female oriented criminal model whereby former trafficked women become partners in crime of the female offenders.

From several sides, this phenomenon resembles to the *social snowball effect* where people get in touch with organized crime activities through their social relations and, as they proceed, their dependence on the resources of other people gradually declines; subsequently they choose their own ways, generating new criminal associations, and attracting people from their own social environment, and the story repeats itself (Kleemans and Poot, 2008: 76).

The analysis of this distinctive aspect of the Nigerian criminal model may suggest a way to shatter Nigerian trafficking, namely by avoiding trafficked women to partake in the business. Even though the Nigerian *modus operandi* is generally acknowledged by NGOs and social service providers (that work in the sector), it has been little debated and analysed in the Italian research at an academic level. Thus, this study represents a starting point in order to encourage further ethnographic studies to enquire on the issue.

In this regards, the Nigerian communities and Brotherhoods still represent unknown and closed social settings that may hide a relevant number of data on the phenomenon.

To better understand what role Nigerian communities spread across all the country play in the THB industry, other fieldwork studies must be done; These studies will allow to compare the different Nigerian groups in Italy, their different degree of concurrence in

the THB offence, and the reasons why they are profitable environments for illegal businesses.

Following these purposes, an ethnographic research methodology represents the only research path to access those social groups and identify the multiple facets contained in each story of trafficking.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX I

Interview with David Mancini: Public prosecutor at the Court of L'Aquila - Criminal section

Notes:

David Mancini followed the investigation SHAEL II, ended with the conviction of five Nigerian citizens who was found guilty for the offences referred to in articles 600-601 and 602 Italian penal code.

The interview took place at the Court of L'Aquila premises, on 9 May 2013, L'Aquila.

Interviewer: How would you define the organizational structure of the syndicates trafficking in Nigerian women?

The structure of the criminal syndicates trafficking Nigerian women is a network of cells. When investigations are carried out thoroughly, it seems clear that there is a kind of "mother house" of the criminal organization in Nigeria. The victims also originate in Nigeria.

The control centre for the trafficking is almost always in Nigeria, where the leaders of the criminal organization live. The organization then branches out and provides logistical support both for the transport of the victims and for their arrival at the destination and subsequent exploitation.

Obviously, depending on the type of transfer involved, the situation can change substantially: air travel is very rapid; overland, however, is much slower and complex. There may be many borders to cross through, for example, Niger, Mali and Libya. At present, travel by land is diminishing. The routes too have changed: lately traffickers often choose to pass through Spain.

The routes are defined by autonomous groups, but always in concert with the criminal organization. The travel arrangements for the victims is in fact run by groups from different ethnic backgrounds, often it is citizens of Niger or Mali or even nomads who

take charge of one section of the entire trip. During overland journeys, victims, once they arrive in Libya, may already be subjected to enforced labour or sexual exploitation. Air travel is clearly much faster. On arrival there are small or medium-sized cells that manage logistics, i.e. reception and accommodation of the victims and, finally, their sexual exploitation. The victim may also be transferred from one place to another within the country of destination and therefore from one cell to another.

I: What exactly do you mean by "cell"?

The cells are groups with a considerable degree of autonomy from what I have called the headquarters: the relationship between the cell and headquarters is one of mutual benefit. The headquarters provides the cell with women for exploitation, for which a fee is paid, or better, a down payment or lump sum for the service.

The way the victim is exploited then depends on the cell in question.

Very often, in the typical structure of Nigerian organizations, the victim is 'managed' by a *madam*, supported by her partner/procurer or other male figures. These are mainly responsible for intimidating the women, controlling the territory and accompanying the victims to designations. Obviously, this type of support is critical to the *madam's* control.

I: In your opinion, then, does the Nigerian criminal underworld have a pyramid organization structure?

No, not really. In fact there is no hierarchical subordination between cells and the headquarters, although there is certainly a sort of dependence in as much as the cells rely on the headquarters for supplies of new girls.

They are the raw material of the business. If the headquarters does not ensure the supply then of course the individual cells are left without. The ability of cells to have many women at their disposal depends on their ability to pay the headquarters quickly and in full.

The headquarters is therefore in Nigeria for a very simple reason: it is the place of origin of a huge pool of desperate people, who usually live in very precarious conditions and critical poverty.

Also, bear in mind that the Nigerian state is, let's say, in some ways, "tolerant" of some forms of trafficking and offers no judicial support to the countries of destination who try to take action...

I: Could this approach by the Nigerian State be due to economic interests, such as the considerable remittances sent home by the madams?

Certainly there are interests at stake. There are probably influential figures involved in this traffic.

I: In the structure you described, does the madam operate alone in a kind of "third level"? I mean in the final phase - exploitation of the women?

In a sense, yes. I have spoken in the past of a third level in trafficking networks. Certainly there is a criminal network that handles 'recruitment' of the victim and the travel arrangements to the country of destination (advances of money, contracting debts, etc.). All of these activities are carried out from the top of the criminal organization in Nigeria and is very much standardized.

I: That is, the ringleaders are responsible for the management aspects of it?

Exactly. To generalize, you can say this about the different levels of trafficking: management is carried out from the top of the criminal organization. This is also the level that is, by its nature, the most organized. Then, at the next level, there are groups of different ethnic backgrounds who are involved in the movement of women over long routes. Their work depends on the commissions they receive. Finally, there are those who receive and exploit the victim. These, in the case of Nigerian trafficking, usually have a clear ethnic connotation.

I: And within this criminal chain, where you would place the madam? At which level?

The *madams* are at the heart of the exploitation cells in the countries of destination of the victims of trafficking.

So they are never found at the managerial level of the ring?

The *madams* do not handle all the traffic, only the individual victims. In this context, they can also have considerable managerial power and represent an entire geographic area, or they may have developed a network that enables them to rapidly transport victims over the whole Italian territory.

However, within the system I described, it is clear that the *madam* must maintain a strong relationship with the central structure in Nigeria. That is, with that part of the organization that systematically finds and transports the girls.

I: Coming back to the Nigerian cells, would you speak of a network among madams in Italy?

No, to say a network would be too formal. Certainly there are communities of Nigerians. It is inevitable that within them there will be contacts and conduct that are criminal in nature. This also happens because the communities are strongly marked by ties of kinship: for example, if a *madam* were involved in trafficking and needs to move a girl (because she has shown signs of insubordination and could go the police), she contacts a relative within a community in another Italian city, move the girl and remain free of suspicion.

Take another example: in a case that came to court last month, the victim in question had serious health problems, she had had a miscarriage and was admitted to hospital in Milan. From there she was moved to Abruzzo on the basis of a kinship tie between the *madam's* partner – who was involved in 'managing' the girls – and those who received the girl in Abruzzo. So these are the types of situation that arise. It is undoubtedly true that a foreign community always creates a rich network of contacts and acquaintances in the adopted country.

I: What do you think of these communities?

Well... they're particular. All foreign communities are melting pots or gathering places, where all things are possible... and there is an inevitable promiscuity where the *madam* lives alongside the girl-victim ...

I: But do you think communities of this type inevitably lead to criminality? For example that in some circumstances the victim may be inclined to think that prostitution and trafficking are in fact normal ...

That's what many Nigerian women think after being subjected to the whole process of trafficking and violence. Some switch sides and in turn become *madams*. The woman realizes that she has been exploited for a long time and decides that it is finally her turn to reap the rewards. She then goes over to the organizational side of things, namely to exploiting other women. With the help of her *ex-madam* she may contact the headquarters in Nigeria to get a woman in exchange for an up front deposit. This was shown very clearly from investigations.

The transition process is gradual. It happens because the woman is so inured to the system that she can not even complain anymore. Instead she develops a deep trust in her *madam*. The *madam* returns her faith by giving her responsibilities for control over other women. If these tasks are carried out faithfully and effectively, the woman is rewarded. This a time of "limbo". From a legal point of view, however, the woman is still justified, because what she does is carried out under duress, where the person cannot act for herself.

It is then, however, that the woman begins to think differently ... and when she can free herself from her *madam*, she may even be able to start exploiting others.

ANNEX II

Interview with Vivian Wiwoloku: Nigerian priest belonging to Waldesian Church, representative of the Nigerian community in Palermo and founder of the non-profit association "Pellegrino della Terra" ("Global Pilgrim").

Notes:

Pellegrino della Terra assists foreign women who are victims of trafficking, helping them to escape their plight and find a new place in society.

Father Wiwoloku has received numerous threats from the Nigerian Mafia. He is not currently given any special protection by the Italian state.

The interview took place at the *Pellegrino della Terra* association premises, on 15 May 2013, Palermo.

Interviewer: Tell me about the Nigerian community in Palermo...

There has been a Nigerian community in Palermo for a long time. Originally Nigerian migrants came to Italy only temporarily, to study and work. Most then moved on from here to the north of Italy, looking for work. Usually Nigerians have only been able to find low skill jobs, such as domestic help. Some opened shops, or started import/export businesses.

Some girls who are now in Italy were brought by other persons, promising them a better life and honest work, as beauticians, baby-sitters or jobs in the tourist sector. The overwhelming majority of these girls fall into the prostitution rings.

I: Does the Nigerian community in Palermo do anything to help these girls?

No, it does not collaborate.

That was the reason I decided not to try to tackle the problem any longer through the Nigerian community. Each time I try to bring up the subject I have been attacked. The reason is simple: you can't discuss trafficking of women with those who run the operation. It goes without saying that they see you as an enemy. It's a never-ending struggle.

They spread rumours about me and try to discredit me. For example, they tell the girls not to turn to me for help because I will just take them to the police and they will be expelled from the country. This is the way they work.

These tactics have been highly successful in stopping victims from approaching me. So at this point I find myself in something of an impasse.

I: I imagine your position is even more complicated by the fact that you are also a priest in the Waldensian church of Palermo. So you have to receive members of the congregation who are part of the Nigerian community...

Yes, I do have to deal with many such persons.. ...it's a difficult situation. Also because no-one understands why I have to do what I do.

(at this point Father Wiwoloku stands and closes the door of the room. In the adjacent room there are two Nigerian girls).

It is very difficult because most of the girls who are brought here to Italy have been forced to sign a contract that requires them to pay for the trip. The exact amount is not specified at the time of the contract.

Before leaving, they sign this contract, in the presence of a lawyer and with their parents as guarantors. The parents usually advance a sum of money, selling a piece of land or taking out a mortgage on the house. At this point the girls have no choice but to fulfil the contract. The whole business takes on a legal status. Sometimes the girls are even informed of how things really are. But, in any case, they think they can make a lot of money within a year. They see other people like them who have made money and they say: "Why can't I do the same?"

You have to remember as well that in the area the girls come from the traditional animist religion is practiced. The girls are taken by the traffickers to participate in a voodoo rite that instils a kind of fear in them. The rite is an oath in front of a priest, who declares that if the girl does not completely pay off the debt an evil spirit will be invoked that will kill her. The priest takes objects identifying the girl, such as blood, nails or hair. These he can use to invoke the spirit and direct it against the girl.

In this way, the girl is doubly bound: on the one hand, by a legal contract, on the other hand, by the voodoo ritual.

In order to help the girls, we first try to eliminate the fear they feel because of the voodoo. For this we pray to the Lord. We tell them not to believe in voodoo. But, as you can imagine, it's very difficult.

I: What happens when the girls arrive in Italy?

When the girls get here there is someone waiting for them. These persons are part of the criminal ring and have "bought" the girls. They make the girls work in the streets. Usually there is someone to instruct them at first. All of their documents are taken, they are threatened, beaten, deprived of food for days. They are told they have signed a contract and that their parents are guarantors. What choice do they have?...

Also there is the whole question of "magic". It's considered ridiculous here in the West, but we have to try to understand the mentality. The girls go on to the streets "armed". For example, they use a cream on their bodies to ensure good trade. The men who go with them fall under their charm. Whatever they ask, the men will do. For example, I've seen a man give a girl all his severance money. The girl told me she had put a spell on him.

Obviously not all transactions between clients and girls are like that. Some get married. Some clients understand the situation and try to help the girls get out of the game. Some clients pay off the debt. The girls say to them: "look, this is my situation, if you want me to stop working the streets, help me".

I: Do the girls always feel obliged to pay off the debt?

Usually, yes. Some girls have fought back. Some have told their *madams* they won't pay any more because they've already given enough. Some even threaten to call the police. Threat of official action is a powerful deterrent to criminals. And if they know the girl has come here to Pellegrino della Terra, they are still more afraid.

I: Are these girls who refuse to pay threatened by the traffickers?

I'll give you an example. There was a girl who wanted to stop working the streets and marry her Italian boyfriend. Her name was Veru. She already had the official permission to marry. She was taken from the street and burnt. It's still not clear who

killed her. They say it was a client...but it's not sure. The *madams* boast about this. They tell their girls: "look what happened to her! If you don't pay something worse will happen to you". You see the way it is?

I: Is there a wide network of madams in Italy?

Well, there are "confraternities". These confraternities have created a network throughout Italy. They are mostly men who collaborate in the prostitution racket. But there are also some women. This confraternity originated among the Nigerians who studied at university. It's a type of mafia. For example in Naples they act as intermediaries between the Camorra and the *madams*. They pay the protection money. In Palermo, these men pretend to be the girls' boyfriends and live off their earnings. In fact, they work for the *madams* because they convince the girl to pay all of the debt. In this way, the girls end up paying the pimp and their *madams*. It's a real trap. Once they used violence against the girls, now they try "softer" methods. The *madams* have learned that if they are nice with the girls, they don't get angry and don't make official complaints. So it's just business as usual.

I: Do the girls themselves ever become involved in the trafficking business?

Sure. This is one of the tricks used by the *madams*. When the girl has almost finished paying, for example 5 thousand Euro, the *madam* says something like: "I see that you've got a good head for business. I'll help you bring a girl here." This is before the girl has paid all the debt. In this way, the girl will not be able to report the *madam* in the future. She becomes an accomplice of the organization. The girl is made to take another oath that she will not reveal anything.

We tell the girls not to do this because it means they are the same as the *madams*.

In short, the *madams* no longer use force on the girls. They understand that if the girl is unhappy and is beaten often, sooner or later she will go to the police. Now the *madams* are all sweetness and light with their girls. They call them sisters. This is the real criminal system.

Faced with this situation, our problem, as an association, is to give the girls an alternative to working on the street. I can try to convince the girls to break free of prostitution, but if there is no real alternative what can I do? For their part, the *madams* tell the girls that there is no other work. That is the real problem.

ANNEX III

Format of an interview to a social service provider

Oria Gargano: representative of the non-profit association “BeFree”, which provides legal and psychological counselling services to the migrants retained in the Centre of Identification and Expulsion in Ponte Galera (henceforth referred to as CIE).

1. How many cases of Nigerian trafficked women you have encountered as social worker at the CIE?

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2. What is the most common type of travel that Nigerian women face?

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3. Are these women subjected to any form of violence or ill-treatment while travelling?

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4. What are Nigerian women’s physical and psychological conditions once they arrive in Italy?

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5. What are living conditions of Nigerian women who are retained in the CIE of Ponte Galera?

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6. What happens when you find that a woman has been a victim of trafficking offence?

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7. Do Nigerian women get in touch with individuals belonging to Nigerian communities during their stay in CIE?

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8. Do Nigerian women get in touch with their madams during their stay in CIE??

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9. Do Nigerian women try to escape from the CIE?

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10. What are the main actors who play a role in Nigerian trafficking? Can you list them?

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11. What role held Nigerian woman within the actors you listed before?

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12. Who is the madam?

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13. Is there any form of relationship between the Madam and her trafficked women?
What kind of relationship?

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14. Are the trafficked women subjected to any form of coercion by her madam?

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15. Do trafficked women report against their Madams on their own will?

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