

“La dolce vita”

Integration patterns of migrants in Italy

Elena Ambrosetti (Sapienza University, Italy)

Eralba Cela (Marche Polytechnic University, Italy)

Tineke Fokkema (NIDI - Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute)

Since the end of 1970s Italy has started to turn into a country of immigration and this widespread phenomenon has undergone a fast growing trend, with an annual growth rate of 5.4% in the years 1981-1990 and a much more higher in the recent two decades (14.1% and 13.7%). In the last 10 years migrant population in Italy has more than tripled, passing from 1,300.000 individuals reported in 2001 census, to 4,6 million residents at the end of 2010 and representing over 7% of the total population, as measured by the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). Today migration constitutes a permanent aspect of the Italian society and its transformation from workforce into a population is represented by the settlement of high number of families and minors born in Italy. Currently, Central Eastern European (Romania and Albania) and Northern African (Morocco) are the largest communities of immigrants in Italy, followed by the Far Eastern Asia (China and Philippine). Since 2007 the increase in immigrants stocks is largely attributed to flows of Eastern European citizens. The pace of the increase of migration flows from Africa and Asia has decreased in the same period. In Italy one of the most important pull factors has been the decreasing number of natives working in sectors such as agricultural, construction and low-skilled service sector jobs (Allasino, Reyneri, Venturini, and Zincone 2004), where migrants often remain embedded without opportunity of occupational mobility (Reynery 2001). Migration policies in Italy are incorporating the idea (as it was in the past for other recent immigration countries) that migration is a temporary phenomenon. Considering its temporary nature, it is usually treated as an emergency with no typical model of migration policies by the Italian government as result. Migration and especially migrant integration policy issues are often delegated to local (regional) government, to the civil society and to religious associations.

Theory and previous findings

During the last decades, the concept of “integration” has received a great deal of attention in academic and political discourse. Integration refers to whether and how ethnic minorities or immigrants incorporate into the society of settlement. Heckmann (2006: 18), for instance, defines integration as: ‘a generations lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society’.

The relation between migration and integration became important with the Chicago school in the 1920s and 1930s. The “key” word of the models originated by Chicago’s scholars is “assimilation”. One of the most important scholar is Robert Park who proposed a “race relation circle”, according to which relations between non-migrants and migrants develop in a sequence of contacts, competition, accommodation and assimilation (Park 1950). It was Gordon (1964) who provided one of the most influential

conceptualisations of assimilation. According to his study of immigrant groups in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, assimilation is a straightforward, unidirectional adaptation of immigrants to mainstream American society. Gordon's theory argues that the longer immigrants live in the receiving society, the more they adapt completely to it and the more they become copies of the majority group. Assimilation is considered as a unidirectional process, in which the immigrants give up their culture and adopt language, culture, and social structure of the host society. In the American context, where the dominant cultural pattern has been influenced by the dominant group, the so-called WASPs, White Anglo Saxon Protestants, the dominant norm has been cultural assimilation and all other groups were expected to adopt completely to the white northern Europeans host society (Gordon 1964).

This conception of assimilation has been strongly criticized because it does not consider the processes in the receiving society and it was apparent that not all immigrants and their offspring give up their culture and adapt completely to the society of settlement and "the melting pot did not happen", as argued by Glazer and Moynihan (1963: 288) in their book "Beyond the Melting Pot". According to the classical and segmented assimilation theory, incorporation occurs steadily over time (Alba and Nee 2003), but this process could be retarded by racial discrimination and other structural barriers (Portes and Rumbaut 2001). The segmented assimilation theory states that ethnic disadvantage slows assimilation ("downward assimilation") and that selective acculturation can facilitate for some immigrants economic incorporation, as a result of immigrants' retaining ethnic cultural repertoires (Portes and Zhou 1993).

In the recent years there has been a return prominence in the use of this term. Esser (2004) for example translates his dimensions of social integration from acculturation, placement, interaction and identification, into cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, social assimilation and identificative assimilation. Overseas Alba and Nee (2003) state for the continuing relevance of the concept, arguing that assimilation is not necessary a one side process, and that "immigrant ethnicity has affected American society as much as American society has affected it" (Alba and Nee 1999). The result of this process is the shrinking of socially relevant differences between groups: "it can take place as changes in two (or more) groups, or parts of them, shrink the differences and social distance between them" (Alba and Nee 1999, 6).

In the European context assimilation has been associated with ethnocentrism and assimilation policies reflecting the attempt of creating nations based on conformity and cultural homogeneity. Nevertheless, because of the European experience with extreme nationalism which produced fascism and Nazism, the term "assimilation" became embarrassing and hence, Europeans prefer to speak about "integration". Like assimilation, integration is a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon hard to define, since it concerns a variety of dimensions and depends on different aspects such as opportunities and migration policies in the host country as well as the "distance/closeness" between the culture of home and host countries. According to Heckmann and Schnapper (2003) integration can be conceptualized as: structural, cultural (or acculturation), interactive or social and identificational, which represent the

basic dimensions of integration useful for operationalization and development of indicators. But different theoretical perspectives about integration imply also different patterns of relationships among its dimensions. This suggests that there is not a fixed number of integration dimensions, and the tendency for dimensions to vary independently of one another will depend on context (e.g., ethnicity, region, time).

The multicultural and integration perspectives emphasize tolerance and respect for ethnic identity and culture and specific ethnic values do not thwart the incorporation (Reitz et al. 2009). Furthermore, the different aspects of integration (economic, spatial, certain aspects of political) and sociocultural integration need not occur together, and indeed often do not empirically (Fokkema and De Haas 2011).

Research aim and questions

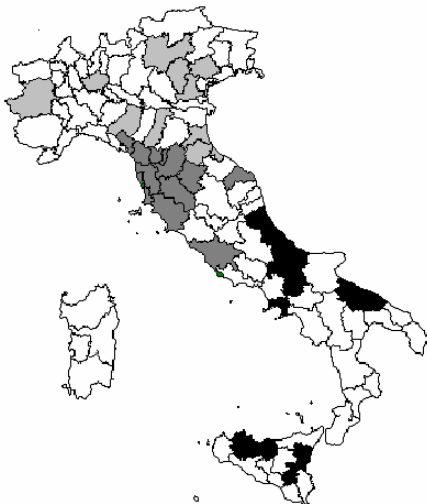
The empirical research on migrants' integration has primarily focused on structural integration and relatively less focused on other aspects of the integration process, as for example the socio-cultural integration of the first-generation migrants (Fokkema and De Haas 2011). Furthermore, in the last two decades the literature on migrants' integration has increasingly focused on the second generation, as their presence is increasing in the Western countries. The most influential studies on this topic arise from the American context, where many scholars focused on the different patterns of integration between migrant groups and between migrants and natives (Alba and Nee 2003, Kasinitz et al. 2008, Portes et al. 2009). In the European context one of the major contribution of the studies on this topic have been comparative studies on the different integration patterns between different countries, attributed to the different policies, labour market, etc. (Ersanilli and Koopmans 2010; Heckmann, Lederer and Worbs 2001; Thomson and Crul 2007; Crul and Schneider 2010). There has been a particular lack of European studies exploring the diversity in integration patterns across different migrant groups as well as generations (first and 1.5/second generation). Hence, our study aims to fill part of this gap by trying to explicate theoretically and assess empirically the extent and manner of integration of migrant groups to the host society. For the empirical part, we will use survey data collected among a large number of different migrant groups in Italy. An improved understanding of the integration patterns across migrant groups in Italy is relevant for our understanding of migrant integration at large, in a country which has evolved into one of the major immigration countries over the last two decades. Insight into the variation in integration patterns across generations is of specific relevance to increase our knowledge on the way in which generations are shaped in the integration processes. The main research questions will be: Are there significant differences between migrant groups in Italy in the degree of integration and its form (i.e., the number of independent dimensions in migrant's integration structure)? And do these differences decrease when we look at the children of these migrants, the second generation?

Data, variables and methods

The data comes from the research project Integrometro “Measuring Integration”¹, carried out on a national scale and coordinated by ISMU Foundation between 2008 and 2009. The survey involved 20 research groups around Italy, covering 32 provincial and municipal areas. More than 12,000 migrants, first and 1.5/second generation, coming from developing countries and aged 19-71, were selected for face to face interviews, according to a sampling method, based on specific meeting centers and places (Blangiardo 1996), which allows to catch the undocumented migrants. In all areas, an identical questionnaire was used, which made it possible to pool the data sets.

The survey focused on the lives of migrants with the purpose to measure the migrants’ level of integration in its different aspects; economic, cultural, social and political. The questionnaire is composed of two sections. In the first one, the questions refer to the four dimensions of integration identified: cultural (knowledge and use of Italian language, interest in the Italian events, use of mass media), social (friendships, participation in association, level of satisfaction with Italian lifestyle), economic (income, employment, housing, perceived difficulties with income) and political (citizenship and opinion on the importance of citizenship for migrants and their children, legal status and registration with Registry Office). The second section encompasses socio-demographic characteristics and questions on remittances and the feeling of belonging to the home country.

Fig. 1 provincial areas involved in the survey



Source: Cesareo, Blangiardo, 2009

The dataset involved 128 different migrant groups, which represents also the innovative aspect of this survey, because in the Italian as well as in the European context, there are not such large-scale surveys focusing only on migration.

¹ For a brief description of the dataset see appendix 1.

After a review of the theoretical literature on migrants' integration in order to shed light about the nature and number of the different dimensions of integration in the theoretical debate, we will perform principal components and cluster analyses to determine the *level* and *types* of integration across the distinct migrant groups and generations. With respect to the degree and form of integration, we expect the highest level of integration and the most pronounced tendencies toward multi-dimensionality to be evident for those migrant groups that are characterized with strong "closeness" with Italy (e.g., colonial bonds, long migration history, community size of the specific migrant group, similar language). Furthermore, we expect that the differences between migrant groups are smaller in case of the second generation.

References

- Alba, R. (1999). Immigration and the American Realities of Assimilation and Multiculturalism, *Sociological Forum*, 14: 1, 3-25.
- Alba, R. and Nee, V. (1999), Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration. *The handbook of international migration: the American experience* (eds.) Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz, Josh DeWind. New York: Russel Sage Foundation. 137-160
- Alba, R. and Nee V. (2003). *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, Mass and London: Harvard University Press.
- Allasino, E., Reyneri E., Venturini A., and G. Zincone (2004). *Labour market discrimination against migrant workers in Italy*, ILO, Geneva.
- Blangiardo G.C. (1996). Il campionamento per centri o ambienti di aggregazione nelle indagini sulla presenza straniera. In: *Atti in onore di G. Landenna*, Milano: Giuffr , 14-30.
- Crul M. and Schneider J. (2010). Comparative Integration Context Theory: Participation and Belonging in New Diverse European Cities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33:1249-1268.
- Ersanilli, E. and Koopmans R. (2010). Rewarding integration? Citizenship regulations and socio-cultural integration of immigrants in the Netherlands, France and Germany. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36.
- Esser H. (2004). Does the "New" Immigration Require a "New" Theory of Intergenerational Integration? *International Migration Review* Volume 38, Issue 3:1126-1159
- Fokkema, T. and de Haas Hein. (2011). Pre- and Post-Migration Determinants of Socio-Cultural Integration of African Immigrants in Italy and Spain. *International Migration*. (Online 3 May 2011)
- Generation?, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33, 1025-1041.
- Glazer, N., and Moynihan, D. P. (1963). *Beyond the melting pot*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Gordon, Milton M. (1964). *Assimilation in American Life: the Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Heckmann, F. (2006). Integration and integration policies. IMISCOE network feasibility study.
- Heckmann, F. and Schnapper, D. (2003). *The Integration of Immigrants in European Societies*. Lucius and Lucius, Stuttgart.

Heckmann, F., H.W. Lederer, and S. Worbs. (2001). *Effectiveness of national integration strategies towards second generation migration youth in a comparative European perspective*. Final report to the European Commission. Bamberg: Emfs.

How is the Transatlantic debate relevant for further research on the European Second

Kasinitz P., Mollenkopf J. H., Waters M. C., Holdaway J. (2008) *Inheriting the city : the children of immigrants come of age* - New York : Russell Sage Foundation ; Cambridge, US : Harvard University Press.

Park, R. E. (1950). *Race and Culture*. The Free Press, Glencoe.

Portes, A., and Zhou M. (1993). The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530:74-96.

Portes, A. and Rumbaut R. G. (2001). *Legacies. The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. Berkeley and New York: University of California Press and Russell Sage Foundation.

Portes A., Fernández-Kelly P., and Haller W. (2009). The Adaptation of the Immigrant Second Generation in America: A Theoretical Overview and Recent Evidence. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35:1077-1104.

Reitz, J. G., Breton R., Dion K. K., Dion K. L., Phan M., and Banerjee R. (2009). *Multiculturalism and Social Cohesion: Potentials and Challenges of Diversity*. New York: Springer.

Reyneri, E. (2001). *Migrants' Involvement in Irregular Employment in the Mediterranean Countries of the European Union*. ILO, Geneva.

Thomson M., Crul M. (2007). The second generation in Europe and the United States :

Waters M., Tran V., Kasinitz P., and Mollenkopf J.. (2010). Segmented Assimilation Revisited: Types of Acculturation and Socioeconomic Mobility in Young Adulthood. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33:1168-1193.

Appendix 1-Dataset presentation

Table 1. first 20 nationalities according gender

	V. A.	Tot. %	Male %	Female %
Romania	1791	14.9	38.6	61.4
Albania	1703	14.2	58.5	41.5
Morocco	1130	9.4	63.7	36.3
China	828	6.9	50.7	49.3
Ukraine	690	5.7	16.1	83.9
Senegal	465	3.9	88.4	11.6
Tunisia	383	3.2	73.4	26.6
Poland	377	3.1	21.1	78.9
Bangladesh	321	2.7	77.1	22.9
Sri Lanka	282	2.3	62.3	37.7
Moldova	277	2.3	25.4	74.6
Philippine	270	2.2	37.0	63.0
Peru	242	2.0	32.6	67.4
Nigeria	209	1.7	46.6	53.4
India	179	1.5	59.9	40.1
Pakistan	160	1.3	81.6	18.4
Macedonia	151	1.3	71.1	28.9
Brazil	145	1.2	28.9	71.1
Egypt	143	1.2	81.0	19.0
Bulgaria	139	1.2	29.5	70.5
Others	2138	17.8	17.7	17.3
Total	12023	100	50.9	49.1

Table. 2 distribution of migrants according their employment condition and gender

	Male	Female	Total
entrepreneur with high qualified employee	4.2%	1.7%	2.9%
Self employed/ employed with permanent contract	38.3%	31.3%	34.8%
short term employed	20.7%	22.0%	21.3%
Irregular employed/ irregular self employed	10.5%	9.9%	10.2%
unemployed	17.5%	12.6%	15.1%
housewife, student, pensioner	5.2%	19.2%	12.0%
do not declare	3.7%	3.3%	3.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table. 3 distribution of migrants according their income and gender

	Male	female	Total
Less then 600 €	12.3%	19.1%	15.4%
From 600 to 799 €	14.7%	34.7%	24.0%
From 800 to 999 €	21.1%	26.9%	23.8%
From 1.000 to 1.199 €	25.1%	12.7%	19.4%
From 1.200 to 1.499 €	16.4%	4.5%	10.9%

From 1.500 to 2.000 €	6.4%	1.4%	4.1%
more then 2.000 €	4.0%	.7%	2.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Tab.4 Perceived difficulties with current income according gender

	Male	female	Total
I am able to save money	39.2%	45.8%	42.4%
I spend all the money	26.2%	24.7%	25.5%
I have difficulties to make ends meet	34.6%	29.5%	32.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Tab.5 Juridical condition according gender

	Male	female	Total
double citizenship	6.2%	9.5%	7.8%
short permit of stay	29.9%	26.1%	28.0%
Visa	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%
undocumented	12.4%	7.5%	10.0%
Long term permit of stay	37.0%	36.6%	36.8%
European permit for EU members	8.1%	14.5%	11.2%
do not declare	3.1%	2.3%	2.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%