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**IMMIGRATION IN ITALY:
A DISTORTED PERCEPTION**

**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON THROUGH TAJFEL’S SOCIAL
IDENTITY THEORY AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS**

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“Language is accurate: you run for your life.

If you are dying, leave. If you are suffering, move.

There is no other law, only movement.”

Amélie Nothomb

ABSTRACT

Questo elaborato analizza il fenomeno dell'immigrazione, tematica centrale della società, della politica e dei mass media, focalizzando l'attenzione sulla situazione Italiana attuale.

Tramite l'elaborazione di dati raccolti dall'Eurobarometro, dall'ISTAT e dall'Eurostat è dimostrato che gli Italiani hanno una percezione distorta di esso, registrando il maggior errore percentuale di immigrati residenti in Italia sulla popolazione totale.

In aggiunta, la popolazione Italiana ha dimostrato di essere chiusa alle altre culture, a tratti quasi razzista, e di considerare gli immigrati più come un fardello che come una risorsa culturale ed economica per il Paese.

La Socio-Psicologia, tramite la Teoria dei Gruppi Minimali e la Teoria dell'Identità Sociale di Henri Tajfel e, successivamente tramite la Teoria della Categorizzazione del sé e la Teoria della Dominanza Sociale, cerca di spiegare la categorizzazione degli individui in gruppi ed il comportamento intergruppi nella società. Essa, integrata dall'Economia Sperimentale, viene utilizzata nello scritto a supporto dei dati con lo scopo di spiegare questo fenomeno.

Nell'ultimo capitolo, i dati e le teorie vengono elaborati insieme con l'intento di fornire possibili soluzioni al problema.

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of this thesis comes from the current Italian, European and world situation, in which migration flows are a central issue. Immigrants are often subjected to prejudice and stereotypes and are considered as scapegoats by the media, in the narration of negative events and crimes.

The aim is to understand the reason why the local population, with particular attention to the Italian one, have the tendency to discourage the integration of immigrants, by implementing discriminatory and racist attitudes. The work is divided in three chapters, as it follows.

In the first chapter the topic of migration is analyzed, starting from an historical investigation, to understand the changes in the migration routes, mainly related to Italy. The topic then shifts to the Italians' perception of immigration, which was developed by elaborating data from the Eurobarometer and the ISTAT and EUROSTAT databases. Then, the theme of the mass media is treated and the role they have in influencing local people's perception of the phenomenon.

The second chapter focuses on the theories of Social Psychology, subsequently used in Experimental Economics, relating to the concept of identity and intergroup relationship. A particular focus concerns Henri Tajfel's studies on Minimal Group Paradigm, the Social Identity Theory, the Self-Categorization Theory and the Social Dominance Theory. The purpose of this chapter is to understand what generates stereotypes and prejudices and what are the factors that push people to identify themselves into groups and that generate distorted perceptions towards the others.

The last chapter, instead, links the phenomenon of immigration to Social Psychology. Through the use of the theories developed in the previous chapter, the aim is to interpret the perception of Italians concerning immigration. It has been demonstrated that Italy is one of the European countries with the most distorted perception about immigrants, both in terms of "numbers" and culture about the incoming people. In addition, this chapter suggests possible ways to reduce the prejudices and the discriminative attitudes that the local population has towards immigrants. By diminishing the distortion of the perception that members of different groups have towards the

others, in fact, it would be possible to achieve an easier integration and a greater acceptance of the foreigners in the society and, consequently, to generate better and peaceful coexistence.

1. MIGRATION AND ITS PERCEPTION IN ITALY

Migration has always been a huge phenomenon in the history of humanity.

It is defined as the process of going from one country, region or place of residence to settle in another.

This flow of people has a great impact on the demography, the culture, the economy and the politics of a Country. It is one of the major realities nowadays and for this reason it is studied through its different aspects, from an anthropological to an economic and a juridical point of view.

In dealing with the topic of immigration and in trying to explain the causes that originate international movements, some authors use the concepts of “push factors” and “pull factors”¹.

The latter indicate all the factors that do not force people to move, but appeal them to do so, to improve their life conditions. A Country with higher PIL, per capita income or more employment than the Country of origin, or more developed welfare systems are examples of pull factors that generate migrants’ movements into more economically developed areas.

With the term “push factors”, instead, are indicated all the causes that generate people’s migration as a consequence of expulsive factors operating in their countries of origin.

In the current phase of global migrations, flows increased mainly in response to some push factors such as wars, as in the case of Syria, terrorism, disasters linked to climate change, which, for example, represent a huge migration’s cause in Africa. Moreover they have been added to more structural factors linked to poverty, underdevelopment, misery and high demographic pressure and similar conditions.

People migrate both voluntary or involuntary respectively because of pull and push factors which include the following causes of movement.

The main reasons are: “social”, when people move to find a better life condition or to reach other members of the family, “economic”, when people escape from poverty or in search of a more

¹ M. Ambrosini, “*Sociologia delle migrazioni*”, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2005

proficient career, “cultural”, mainly due to religion or education, “political” like civil wars or political persecutions in the home countries and “environmental”, which mainly take place after calamities and natural disasters.

As globalisation increases, so does migration and displacements which reached one of the highest peaks in the last few years ². However not all the people who migrate are considered in the same way. On one hand, there are tourists, workers and students, who are welcomed by most of the Countries, that seek to promote the internal labour market for highly qualified personnel coming from other countries.

On the other hand, there are migrants who come from unfavourable living situations, that are not always welcomed by the arrival Countries and who have to face complicated regulations regarding international protection, to be accepted.

The latter mainly migrate due to an increase in conflicts, persecutions, environmental degradation and deficits in human security and opportunity all around the world ³.

People who escape from this difficult life conditions are distinguished into: refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons and stateless people. A “refugee” ⁴ defined as someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries. The 67% of all refugees worldwide comes from the following 5 countries: Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia. To be considered a refugee and to be protected by the welcoming Country a person has to obtain the “refugee status”. An “asylum seeker” ⁵ is a person who flees its own country and seeks sanctuary in another Country, applying for asylum, the right to be recognized as a refugee and

² “World Migration Report 2018”, International Organization for Migrations (IOM), Geneve, 2017, (https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/country/docs/china/r5_world_migration_report_2018_en.pdf)

³ As affirmed by the IOM (the International Organization of Migrations of the United Nations: <https://www.iom.int/>)

⁴ Definition from the UN refugee agency: UNHCR (<https://www.unrefugees.org/>)

⁵ Definition from the UN refugee agency: UNHCR (<https://www.unrefugees.org/>)

receive legal protection and material assistance. An “internally displaced person” ⁶ (IDP), is someone who has been forced to flee their home but never cross an international border. IDPs, which include people displaced by internal strife and natural disasters, are the largest group that UNHCR assists. Unlike refugees, IDPs are not protected by international law or eligible to receive many types of aid because they are legally under the protection of their own government. Someone who, instead has no citizenship in any Country, is defined as a stateless person ⁷. This individual’s condition belongs to a minority that need to be protected inasmuch, according to the Declaration of Human Rights “everyone has the right to a nationality”.

1.1. The history of immigration in Italy

Italy has a long migration tradition, first as an emigration and subsequently as an immigration.

Since its unification in the 19th century, Italy was one of the leading European emigration Countries, registering millions of Italians moving at first through transatlantic flows to America, focusing mainly in the United States, Argentina and Brazil, until the second half of the 1970s. In those years the Italians started to move through intra-European routes, mainly directed to Countries as, for example: France, Switzerland and Germany.

Italian emigration was mainly driven by economic factors. The crises in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors dramatically reduced incomes and a drop of the jobs, which persisted in the following decades, during which the emigration flux continued.

Hence, for over a century, emigration has been a valid instrument for rebalancing the labour market of the Country, and substantial shares of Italian labour have been absorbed by the economies of other Countries, lowering the level of unemployment in the peninsula.

⁶ Definition from the UN refugee agency: UNHCR (<https://www.unrefugees.org/>)

⁷ Definition from the UN refugee agency: UNHCR (<https://www.unrefugees.org/>)

Italians accounted for one of the largest voluntary emigration in history, with 13 million leaving between 1880 and 1915 ⁸.

In addition, another important mobility involved internal migrations from the poorest areas located in the South to its wealthier areas in the North.

Since the half of the last century, despite the still high number of emigrants mainly directed to Germany and Belgium, Italy started to welcome the first immigrants.

A first pull factor attracting migrants to Italy is represented by the ex-colonials' residents; registering some flows of Italian entrepreneurs, businessmen and families who returned from Countries as Eritrea, Etiopia and Somalia ⁹. Then some migrant women employed in the domestic sector, coming from East Africa, Latin America and Asia, moved in the Country, supported by due Catholic organizations. They were followed by the first Tunisians who moved to Sicily to be employed as seasonal workers in fishing and agriculture ¹⁰. Nevertheless, in these years the number of immigrants moving to Italy was almost imperceptible.

With time, the migration flows to our country have significantly intensified, until 1973 ¹¹ when the incoming migrants overcame the number of the emigrants and Italy transformed itself from a Country of emigration to a Country of immigration. Italy became one of the first landing places, for citizens from the third world, whether for permanent settlement or as a way station.

Shifting demographics that began in the mid-20th century, increased the demand of foreign workers, which acted as push factors for migration toward wealthier Countries, among them Italy.

Despite the phenomenon of immigration is not a novelty, the nationality of the incoming people changed during the years.

⁸ Source: "From Emigration to Asylum Destination, Italy navigates shifting migration tides", Migration Policy Institute (MPI), 24/08/2017 (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/emigration-asylum-destination-italy-navigates-shifting-migration-tides>)

⁹ M. Colucci, "Storia dell'immigrazione straniera in Italia. Dal 1945 ai giorni nostri", Carocci Editore, 2018

¹⁰ G. Bettin, E. Cela, "*The evolution of migration flows in Europe and Italy*", *Economia Marche Journal of Applied Economics*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, 2014

¹¹ J. W. Veugelers, "Recent immigration politics in Italy: a short story", *West European Politics*, 1994

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and of the following regimes, these first flows increased and Italy became a major destination of many Eastern European migrants. In the early Nineties migrants arrived from Albania on overcrowded boats, the Former Yugoslavia and Poland, registering a value of 556 thousand individuals, equal to the 0.6% of the total population in 1991. Intensive flows from other Eastern European Countries started, instead in the early 2000s, in particular from Romania, Ukraine and Moldova. These events were reported by the media as generators of both solidarity and fear among Italians.

Until 2006, Albanians and Moroccans were the two largest shares of foreign population living in Italy, but after Romania joined the European Union, Romanians outpaced them ¹².

In the new century, political and economic developments far beyond Italy's borders have brought inflows of asylum seekers and migrants from diverse regions, including Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.

The collapse of authoritarian regimes in North Africa and the Middle East and the Arab Spring in 2011, generated huge flows of people escaping from civil war and persecutions to reach Europe. Italy, Greece, and the Balkan Countries represented the first destinations for these asylum seekers and had to provide them welcome and the assistance as established by the European regulations.

Several are the reasons why Italy is one of the preferred destinations by immigrants: first of all its geographical location, surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, represents a logical passage for maritime arrivals of people who intend to move onward to reunite with relatives or to find work in Germany, Sweden, and other Northern European Countries.

In addition the characteristics of the Italian borders does not help to have a complete and correct supervision of all the landings. In fact the peninsula is constituted by coasts that are easily reachable and difficult to control and, until the last period, it had also an alleged lower rigidity compared to

¹² Source: "From Emigration to Asylum Destination, Italy navigates shifting migration tides", Migration Policy Institute (MPI), 24/08/2017 (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/emigration-asylum-destination-italy-navigates-shifting-migration-tides>)

other European Countries, accustomed to stronger controls given their tradition of Countries of arrival of migratory flows.

Nowadays, as the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) reported, the number of foreigners who legally live in Italy is equal to the 8.7% of the total population, but it is not easy to understand the total number of immigrants, especially in the light of the illegal ones without documents who live in the Country. However, the latter do not represent a huge number do not bring a huge change in the total value, because the number of irregular immigrants is estimated around the 10% of the legal ones ¹³.

This phenomenon started to be regulated in 1986 in Italy, with the introduction of the Foschi Law, first, and of the Martelli Law (1989).

Both were relevant to recognize migrants' rights and to improve their status of foreign workers and of their families. Nevertheless, they were ineffective in the regulation of the economic migration flows and to reduce the number of irregular immigrants. The Martelli Law was replaced in 1998 by the Turco-Napolitano Law. The latter separated the humanitarian issues from the immigration policy, intervening also in supporting refugees' integration and increasing control over illegal immigration. Subsequently, in 2002, the Italian government approved the Bossi-Fini Law, which established higher detention times of unauthorized migrants and reduced integration's tools, increasing also the length of the period of residence, before authorizing family reunification.

In 2009 it was introduced the Safety Package which consisted in a set of laws to avoid incomings of unauthorized immigrants from other EU Member States. It was mainly referred to extra-EU and stateless people, to condemn the illegal entry and stay in the Italian territory and it introduced the crime of illegal immigration ¹⁴.

¹³ Source: Fondazione ISMU. Iniziative e studi sulla Multi etnicità, (<http://www.ismu.org/>)

¹⁴ Source: Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, legge del 15 luglio 2009, No. 94, (<https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/gunewsletter/dettaglio.jsp?service=1&datagu=2009-07-24&task=dettaglio&numgu=170&redaz=009G0096&tmstp=1248853260030>)

In April 2017, it was introduced the Minniti Decree which aims to speed up the asylum seekers' application process and to recognize them from unauthorized immigrants. It also increased the number of detention centers and introduced voluntary work to integrate asylum seekers.

The following year, the Security and Immigration Decree was approved, with the aim to modify rules on asylum, immigration, citizenship and security, making them harsher.

It abolished humanitarian protection and it regulated immigrants' detention in the hotspots and in the first reception facilities, as the Cas (Extraordinary Reception Centers) and the Cara (Reception Centers for Asylum Seekers) to ascertain their identity and citizenship.

In addition it restricted the system for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees (Sprar) only to those who already hold the benefit of international protection and to unaccompanied minors.

1.2. Immigration in Italy. A distorted perception.

This work has the aim to analyze the phenomenon of immigration in Italy, focusing on the perception of the local citizens. Because of its position, located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, Italy represents one of the "easiest" reachable countries, inasmuch it is one of the closest to Africa and, as a consequence it is one of the most popular destinations for the immigrants.

The latter, together with other economically developed European countries, needs "poor work" and offers a working environment which is ethnically divided. This sector which has the tendency to exploit immigrants' work it is defined by some academics as Ambrosini, Sciortino ¹⁵ and Basso ¹⁶: "dangerous, precarious, heavy, poorly paid and socially penalizing" and it mainly hire immigrants who have the tendency to accept any job to start a new life in the Country of arrival.

Immigrants do not always have the will to stop in the peninsula, but they land in Italy, to subsequently try to reach other countries, such as the North Europe. However the news of the landings which mainly involve southern Italy, joint to the picture offered by the media generate a general alarm among the Italian population which believes to be constantly invaded by those

¹⁵ G. Sciortino, A. Colombo, "*Gli immigrati in Italia*", Bologna, Il Mulino, 2004

¹⁶ P. Basso, F. Perocco "*Gli immigrati in Europa: Diseguaglianze, razzismo, lotte*", Roma, Franco Angeli, 2003

people. As a consequence it is really important to understand the general idea people have about this issue, at a time when every day we are bombed with news about migrants and shipwrecks in the Mediterranean Sea.

Because of this, there is a significant part of the Italian population which believes that immigration is dramatically increasing and that the majority of the immigrants are the poorer people who move to ask for asylum as first reason ¹⁷. In addition there is a general perception that the main share of the foreigners living in Italy comes from Africa and that most of them are Muslims.

This is incorrect, inasmuch the largest share of religion practiced by incoming people is Christianity ¹⁸. Moreover one of the principal reasons they move is family reunification and most of those who manage to arrive to Europe and bear the costs to travel generally belong to the middle class of their Country of origin.

Despite the general belief that most of those fleeing war and persecutions head for Europe, the latter are just a small percentage of all the displaced people in the World.

Most of them, indeed, move from their Country to the neighbouring ones to live in refugee camps and overpopulated suburbs or “bidonville”.

The Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), indeed registered a different situation, from the one perceived by the majority of the Italians.

Italian registry offices collected a total of 5.255.503 foreigners residing in Italy on 01/01/2019, which are equal to the 8,7% of the total population ¹⁹. This numbers grew year after year, registering a number of 4.570.317 foreigners living in Italy on 01/01/2011 ²⁰ and of 1.334.889 on 01/01/2001 ²¹.

¹⁷ C. Dambone, L. Monteleone, “*La paura dello straniero. La percezione del fenomeno migratorio tra pregiudizi e stereotipi*”, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2019

¹⁸ Source: Fondazione ISMU. Iniziative e studi sulla Multietnicità, (<http://www.ismu.org/>)

¹⁹ Source: <https://www.tuttitalia.it/>

²⁰ Source: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT), (<https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/39726>)

²¹ Source: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (ISTAT), (http://dawinci.istat.it/MD/download/com_stranieri.pdf)

On the other hand, lately a huge number of Italians is emigrating abroad, registering a number of 5,1 millions ²² in the same year, of which 128.193 only in the last year ²³.

The 50,2% of the latter ²⁴ is composed of Europeans, while the 21,7% are Africans, the 20,8% are Asians, the 7,2% comes from America and a residual equal to the 0,04% and 0,02% are respectively from Oceania and stateless people.

The largest foreign community comes from Romania with 23,0% of all foreigners living in the Country, followed by the Albanian community, equal to 8,4%, and the Moroccan one (8,0%).

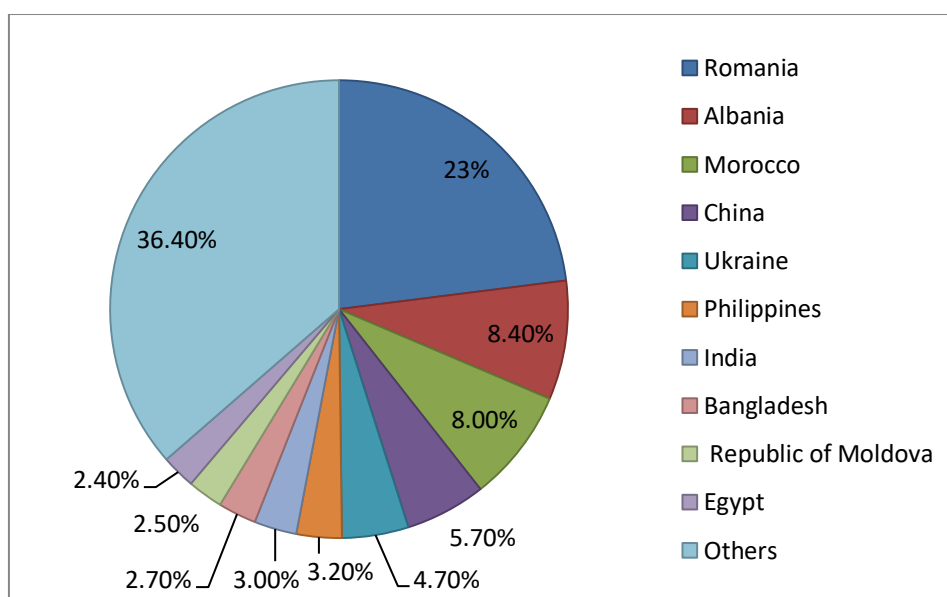


Figure 1. Foreign communities in Italy in 2019. Source: ISTAT

These data are not always clear to the public opinion, mainly because they are sometimes presented in a distorted and fragmented way. As a consequence, the perception of immigration, among local citizens, differs from the real situation of the Country.

²² Source: Anagrafe Italiani residenti all'estero (A.I.R.E.), (<https://www.esteri.it/mae/it>)

²³ Source: Fondazione Migrantes, (<https://www.migrantes.it/>)

²⁴ The foreign population and the immigrant population are different, but most of the people tend to use the two terms in the same way. ISTAT speaks of "foreign population" as that part of the population composed of all the residents with a non-Italian citizenship, including both people who were born in another Country and people born in Italy, with foreign origins. Differently from the immigrant population, which refers both to people with a non-Italian citizenship and to all the foreigners who subsequently acquired it, the foreign population does not include the latter.

According to the Eurobarometer ²⁵ survey, which collected data related to 28 Member State of the European Union, Italy is the Country with the most distorted perception regarding the immigrants living in their Country.

Figure 2 shows the real and the perceived percentages of immigrants compared to the total population, for all the following 28 Member States.

It was asked to some Italians to score the proportion of immigrants in the total population. They had to choose between the following answers: “from 0% to less than 6%”, “from 6% to less than 12%”, “from 12% to less than 25%”, “25% or more” or “don’t know”.

The shares of the respondents are respectively: 8%, 14%, 20%, 31% and 27%. These data register the highest number of people, at European level, believing that immigrants exceed the 25% of the Italian population ²⁶.

Eurobarometer’s participants were also asked to reply to the following question: “overall, to what extent do you think that you are well informed or not about immigration and integration related matters?”

The total of Italians who define themselves “well informed” is equal to 34%, while the “not well informed” is the 62% and the share of people who “do not know” corresponds to the 4% ²⁷.

²⁵ The Special Eurobarometer 469” about the Integration of immigrants in the European Union was published on April 2018. The data used to build it were collected in October 2017 from EUROSTAT. The percentage of immigrants (defined as: people born outside EU) in Italy corresponded to the 7% of the total population.

²⁶ By analyzing the answers Italian gave to this affirmation, more in detail, it is possible to see that: a 1% of the respondents estimated the immigrants’ proportion on the Italian population “from 0% to less than 3%”, a 6% “from 3% to less than 6%”, a 3% “from 6% to less than 9%”, an 11 % “from 9% to less than 12%”, a 2% “from 12% to less than 15%”, a 9% “from 15% to less than 20%”, a 10% “from 20% to less than 25%”, a 13% “from 25% to less than 35%”, an 11% “from 35% to less than 50%”, a 7% with a perception equal to “50% or more” and the remaining 27% “don’t know” how to reply.

²⁷ The Eurobarometer registers the same shares for the European average (EU 28 Member States), which corresponds to the 37%, 61% and 2%. From the same survey stand out two North European countries, where citizens feel particularly “well informed”: Denmark (with corresponding percentages equal to: 73%, 26% and 1%) and Sweden (70%, 30%, 0%). The situation is different in Croatia (18%, 81% and 1%) and Estonia (30%, 69%, 1%), despite the gap between real immigrants and perceived ones was almost null. This could be a sign that, despite citizens can be more or less informed about the numbers, it is not obvious that they know how immigration works in their Country.

Belgium	BE	Lithuania	LT
Bulgaria	BG	Luxembourg	LU
Czech Republic	CZ	Hungary	HU
Denmark	DK	Malta	MT
Germany	DE	The Netherlands	NL
Estonia	EE	Austria	AT
Ireland	IE	Poland	PL
Greece	EL	Portugal	PT
Spain	ES	Romania	RO
France	FR	Slovenia	SI
Croatia	HR	Slovakia	SK
Italy	IT	Finland	FI
Republic of Cyprus	CY*	Sweden	SE
Latvia	LV	United Kingdom	UK
European Union – weighted average for the 28 Member States			EU28

Table 1. EU 28 Member States

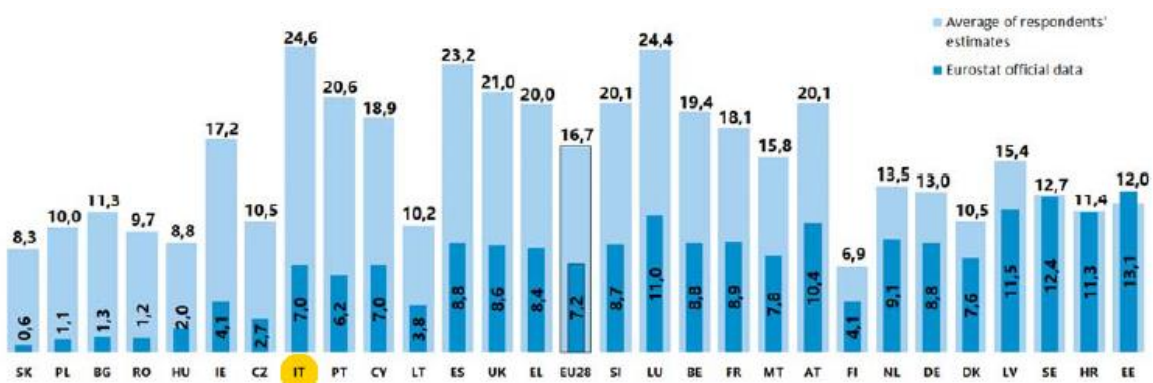


Figure 2. "What is the proportion of immigrants in the total population?". Real (Eurostat data) and perceived shares ²⁸.

In the histogram it stands out that Italy has the greatest gap, expressed in percentage points (p.p.) between the estimated (by the respondents) and the real percentage of immigrants living in the Country. The error of perception is equal to +17,6 p.p. and shows that, unlike in North European countries (i.e. Sweden: +0,3 p.p.), Croatia (+0,1 p.p) and Estonia (-1,1 p.p) where the gap is very small, Italian citizens are not well informed about the current situation in their country.

Comparing the self perception of knowledge about immigration between the 28 EU Member States, it stands out that the Italian values are in line with the European average.

To understand what Italians think about immigration in their country, it is important to analyze what the natives think about its socio-economic impact.

Figure 3 registers this data for the same 28 EU Member States considered above.

²⁸ Source: The Special Eurobarometer 469” about the Integration of immigrants in the European Union

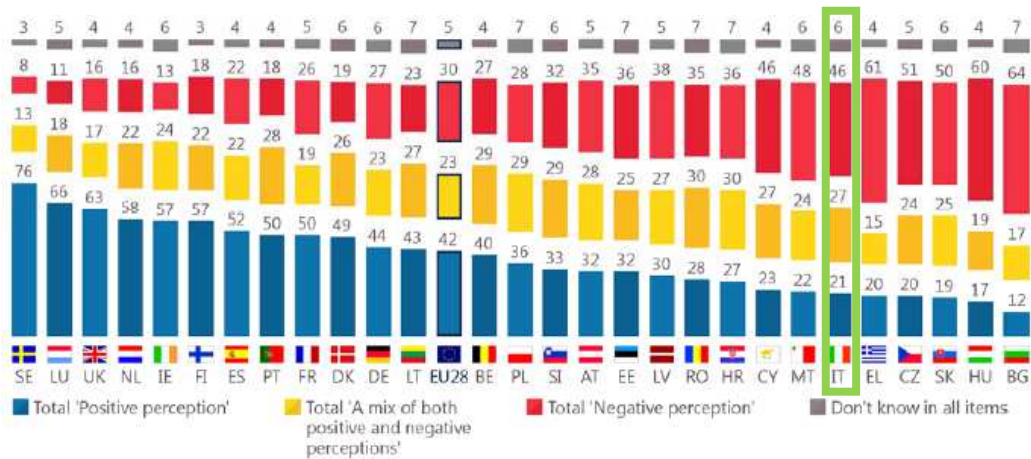


Figure 3. Perception regarding the immigrants' impact in the local society (%) ²⁹

Italy registers a low share of people considering immigration a positive phenomenon, corresponding only to a fifth of the total respondents.

The share of Italian respondents who think immigration has a negative impact on the society is, instead, close to the half of the population.

From these data it stands out that the immigration “issue” is not well managed in Italy and that the information citizens get, from the society and from the media, are not always well detailed.

Accordingly, depending on the immigration’s image the local society is exposed to, the latter tends to define it as an opportunity or as a problem.

Italy, together with Bulgaria registers the lowest share of people who consider immigration as “more of an opportunity”, registering a value lower than one tenth of the total population (6%).

Figure 4 collects percentages for all the 28 Member States of the European Union.

²⁹ Source: The Special Eurobarometer 469” about the Integration of immigrants in the European Union

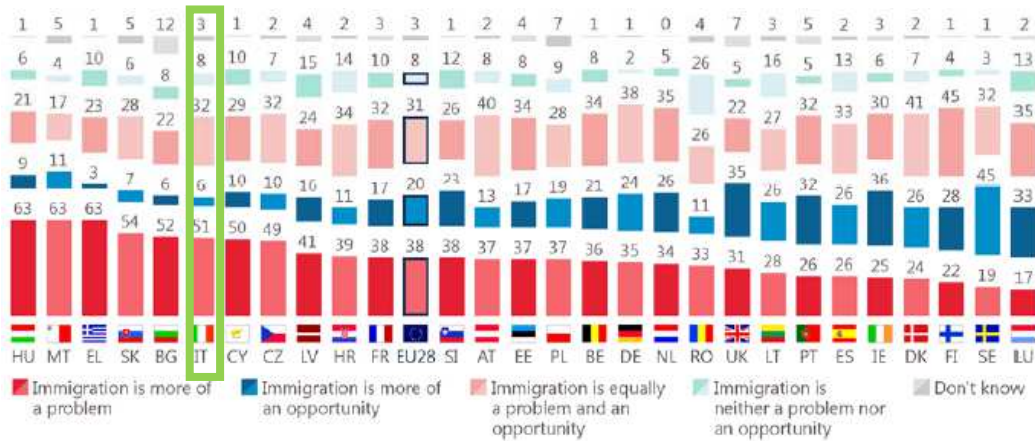


Figure 4. Perception about immigration as a problem or an opportunity (%)³⁰

It is interesting to compare the Italian data, with some EU Countries, to understand how Italy performs overall with the rest of Europe. Three are the Countries that are going to be analyzed, joint to Italy: Sweden, United Kingdom and Spain. This choice is not random, indeed Sweden is one of the European Countries which performs better in managing immigration and behaves almost at the opposite as Italy. UK is also famous to have a multicultural population and a good living and working integration., while Spain is often compared to Italy, because they are considered “similar” countries under a lot of aspects, but it also performs better for immigration policies.

From this comparison, it stands out that Italy behaves differently from Sweden both in Figure 3 and in Figure 4. The percentages of those seeing immigration “more of a problem” and “more of an opportunity” are the most extreme, showing that more than the half of the Italian respondents think about it as a trouble, rather than a good occasion for their Country.

Spain and UK behave different, too. The shares of the population that consider immigration “equally a problem and an opportunity” and “neither a problem nor an opportunity”, instead register similar values between Italy, these three Countries and the European average (EU 28).

Hence, to make it shorter, a 51% of the Italian respondents see immigration as a problem. A 32% of the people, instead define it both as a problem and as an opportunity and just a lower percentage considers immigrants a source of opportunity both for the society and for the Country.

³⁰ "Generally speaking, do you think immigration is more of a problem or more of an opportunity for your country today?" (source: Eurobarometer)

In evaluating the phenomenon, respondents were also asked to reply to more detailed questions.

To follow there are some examples of data where Italians perform quite differently from the European average and that confirm an unfavourable perception of the immigration as an opportunity.

At first Eurobarometer's respondents were asked to evaluate if the impact of immigrants on society enriches the cultural life of their Country ³¹.

The share of Italian respondents who agree with this quote is equal to the 45%, registering a lower value than the European average (61%: "total agree", 34%: "total disagree", 5%: "don't know").

Even in this case Sweden performs very differently, registering the highest share of consenting people (93%: "total agree", 6%: "total disagree", 1%: "don't know").

Always, over time in art, music and cuisine people sought a foreign influence to enrich the culture and to develop new sounds, flavours and techniques.

In addition, it is the Italians who have always been defined as: "a population of poets, artists, heroes, saints, thinkers, scientists, navigators, transmigrators" ³².

Hence it is not easy to understand how such a huge share of respondents disagree with the fact that different cultures may enrich the cultural life.

This data could therefore confirm that a consistent part of the Italian population is not willing to accept and integrate "the foreigner" because immigration has been seen as something different from their comfort zone and perceived as a "danger" and a security threat.

Considering the impact immigrants have on the economy of the Country, the percentage of the population that has a negative opinion exceeds the half.

³¹ In this question, the creators of the Eurobarometer were referring to art, music, food, and similar factors.

³² "Un popolo di poeti, di artisti, di eroi, di santi, di pensatori, di scienziati, di navigatori, di transmigratori". These are the carved words on the Palace of the Italian Civilization which is located in the EUR area in Rome.






Country		“Total agree”	“Total disagree”	“Don’t know”
ITALY		37%	55%	8%
EU28		51%	40%	9%
SWEDEN		69%	27%	4%
UK		69%	20%	11%
SPAIN		60%	30%	10%

Table 2. Perception about the positive/negative effect immigration has on the economy (%) ³³

Table 2 registers the shares of the respondents who agree, or not, to the fact that immigrants have a positive overall impact on the economy of the Country.

Even in this case the share of Italian respondents that disagree with the fact that immigration generates a positive effect on the economy is higher than the people who agree or who are not able to give a specific answer. United Kingdom and Sweden, instead register the highest shares of people agreeing with it in Europe, after Ireland. Immediately after there is Spain which, despite the shared similarities with Italy, confirms to have a different and more open attitude in welcoming extra-EU citizens.

This perception is also linked to the fact that immigrants bring new ideas and boost innovation in the Country. The following table confirms the same ideas of the previous one, registering the highest share of affirmative reply for Sweden in Europe.

³³ “There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants on the society (in our country). To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Overall, immigrants have an overall positive impact on the (nationality) economy, in %”. (Source: Eurobarometer).

By analyzing the answers Italian gave to this affirmation, more in detail, it is possible to see that: a 7% of the respondents “totally agree”, a 30% “tend to agree”, a 33% “tend to disagree”, a 22% “totally disagree” and the remaining 8% “don’t know” how to reply.






Country	“Total agree”	“Total disagree”	“Don’t know”
ITALY 	37%	56%	7%
EU28 	49%	41%	10%
SWEDEN 	87%	11%	2%
UK 	65%	21%	14%
SPAIN 	56%	32%	12%

Table 3. Perception about the fact that immigrants bring new ideas and/or boost innovation (%) ³⁴

In perceiving immigrants in a negative way and as a danger for Country and for the Italian population, crime plays an important role.

One of the most negative perceptions Italians have about immigrants, indeed is related to this topic and to the general idea that there is a correlation between new arrivals and the rise of crime.

Three quarters of the population, indeed agree with the statement that immigrants worsen crime problems in their Country.

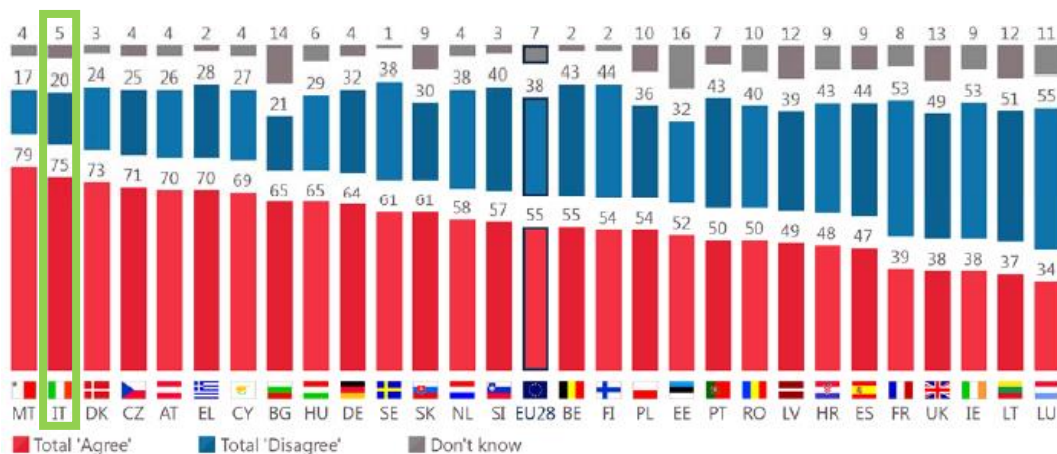


Figure 5. Perception about the link between immigration and the rise of crime (%)

³⁴ “There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants on the society (in our country). To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Overall, immigrants bring new ideas and/or boost innovation in our Country (%)”. (Source: Eurobarometer).

By analyzing the answers Italian gave to this affirmation, more in detail, it is possible to see that: a 8% of the respondents “totally agree”, a 29% “tend to agree”, a 30% “tend to disagree”, a 26% “totally disagree” and the remaining 7% “don’t know” how to reply.

It is interesting to analyze Figure 5 and what the European population think about this statement in the single Countries³⁵.

The reason why this perception exists could be linked to the fact that the media have the tendency to alarm the population about the increment of immigration and to highlight the nationality of the criminals, when they are foreigners. As a consequence it is generated a general perception that crime has grown as a consequence of the incoming people, even if, as showed by professor Paolo Pinotti, who focused some of his studies in understanding this theme, crimes seem to be generally diminished lately.

Italy registers the second-highest percentage of those agreeing with this statement and, in spite of the value is really high, the result is in line with the overall data, as a confirmation of a negative perception about this issue.

It is, instead peculiar the case of Sweden. This is, indeed the only case when this country exceeds the European average and the perception of the local citizens is negative towards the “foreigner”.

It seems that the perception that an increment of the immigrants brings a rise of crime does not only concern Italians, but it is widespread throughout Europe. Only in 5 of the 28 Member States of the European Union, the percentage of the locals agreeing with this statement is lower than the 40% of the population, while in all the others it goes from about the half to 79% of the population.

Another topic that conveys the negative perception people have about immigrants it is the link between them and jobs’ reduction.

³⁵ “There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants on the society (in our Country). To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Overall, immigrants worsen the crime problem in our Country (%)”. (Source: Eurobarometer).

By analyzing the answers given by the Italians to this affirmation, more in detail, it is possible to see that: a 37% of the respondents “totally agree”, a 38% “tend to agree”, a 16% “tend to disagree”, a 4% “totally disagree” and the remaining 5% “don’t know” how to reply.






Country		“Total agree”	“Total disagree”	“Don’t know”
ITALY		58%	38%	4%
EU28		39%	57%	4%
SWEDEN		12%	87%	1%
UK		33%	60%	7%
SPAIN		47%	62%	3%

Table 4. Perception about the fact that immigrants take jobs away from workers (%) ³⁶

From Table 4 it stands out that the share of Italians who believe that immigrants take jobs away from workers exceeds the half of the respondents.

On the contrary Sweden comes back to record the lowest percentage in Europe of locals who have a perception “against the immigrants”, registering a value equal to the 12%.

It seems that, unlike Sweden which economically performs among the best European member states, in Italy, one of the Countries which is still experimenting a huge crisis and recession, there is the general perception that immigrants “steal jobs away from Italians”.

Most likely this belief is one of the main consequences of what Italian media communicate to the society, which often combine the crisis with the phenomenon of immigration.

However the perception of the citizens is also affected by several factors and life experiences.

Even if in different percentages, these elements are common in all the Countries. The most significant factor which influences the citizens’ perception is the age. The oldest cohort of Eurobarometer’s respondents, composed by 55 years old or older people, tend to have a lowest tendency to accept immigrants and to see the positive side of the phenomenon, than those aged

³⁶ “There are different views regarding the impact of immigrants on the society (in our Country). To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Overall, immigrants take jobs away from workers in our Country (%)”. (Source: Eurobarometer).

between 15 and 54. As a matter of fact they register a higher value both regarding the belief that immigrants are a burden for the welfare system, and the fact that the latter increase the crime ³⁷.

Other examples of factors which influences the beliefs, recording different shares between members of the society, are: the level of education, the social class to which members belong and their economic wellness. All these factors influence both what people think about immigrants, but also the perception of the latter on the total population of the Country.

Analyzing more in depth the case of Italy, the cohort of the citizens who ended their education after the compulsory school is the one with the most distorted perception of immigrants, that according to their opinion account for the 28,1% of the total population. The percentage diminishes between the people who finish high school and get a diploma (25,6%) and falls between people who attended university, registering a percentage of perceived immigrants equal to the 17,9% of the total population.

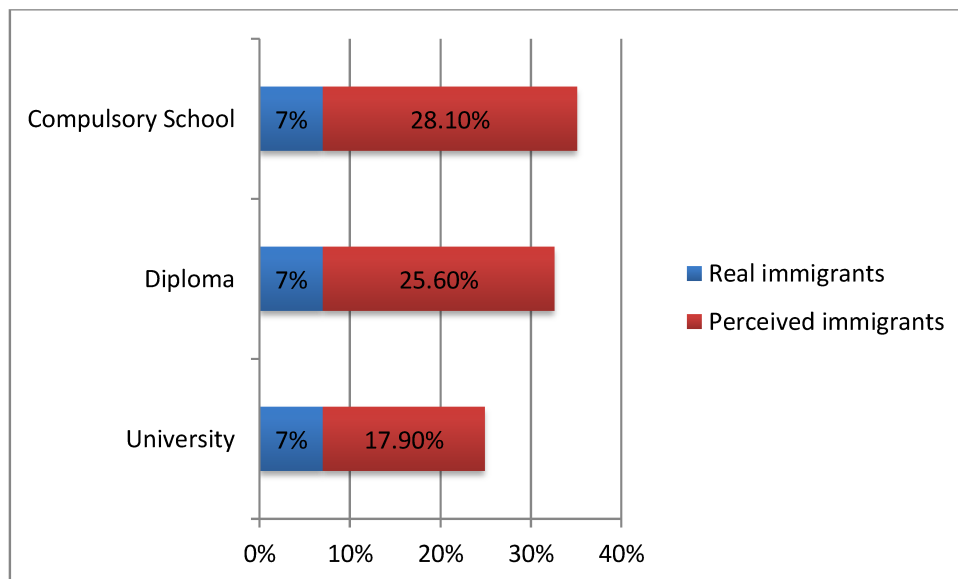


Figure 6. Real and perceived immigrants in Italy, for level of education (%) ³⁸

A higher education seems to help people in limiting the error made while they estimate immigration, reducing also the negative perception Italians have about immigrants. Even the

³⁷ Overall the share of people who consider immigrants as a burden aged 55 or more is equal to 61%, while the younger respondents register a share of 46%. Considering, instead the crime issue, the percentages for the same cohorts are respectively: 60% and 48%.

³⁸ Source: Own elaboration based on Eurobarometer and Eurostat data.

professional sphere of the citizens seems to influence their perception about immigration. As a matter of fact, the more the people are high-qualified, the less they perceive immigrants as a threat. This fact stands out in Figure 7, which registers the perception of the share of immigrants on the total of the Italian population, according to the social class people belong to.

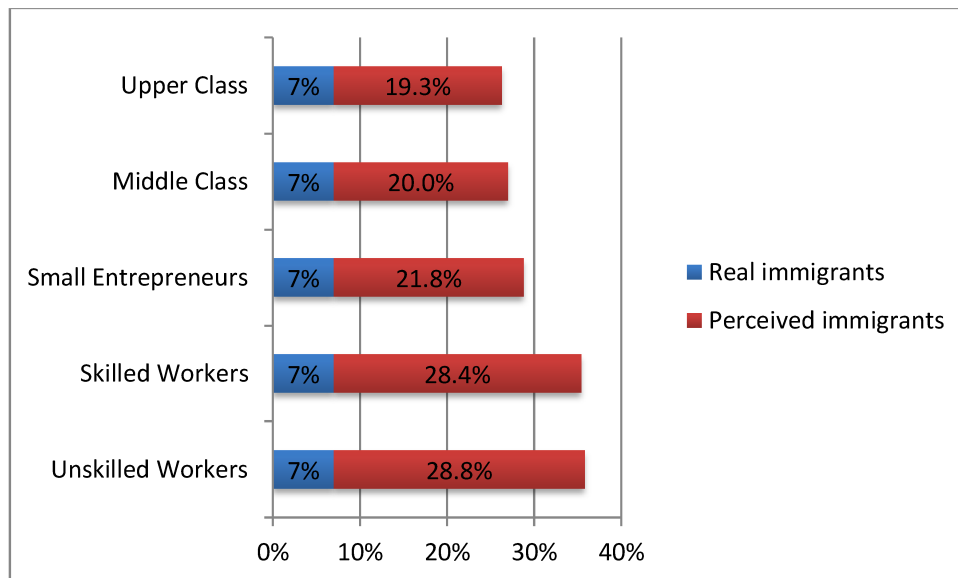


Figure 7. Real and perceived immigrants in Italy, for social class (%) ³⁹

Italian's beliefs on immigration are also influenced by the geographical location of the respondents. The different perceptions are collected in Figure 8.

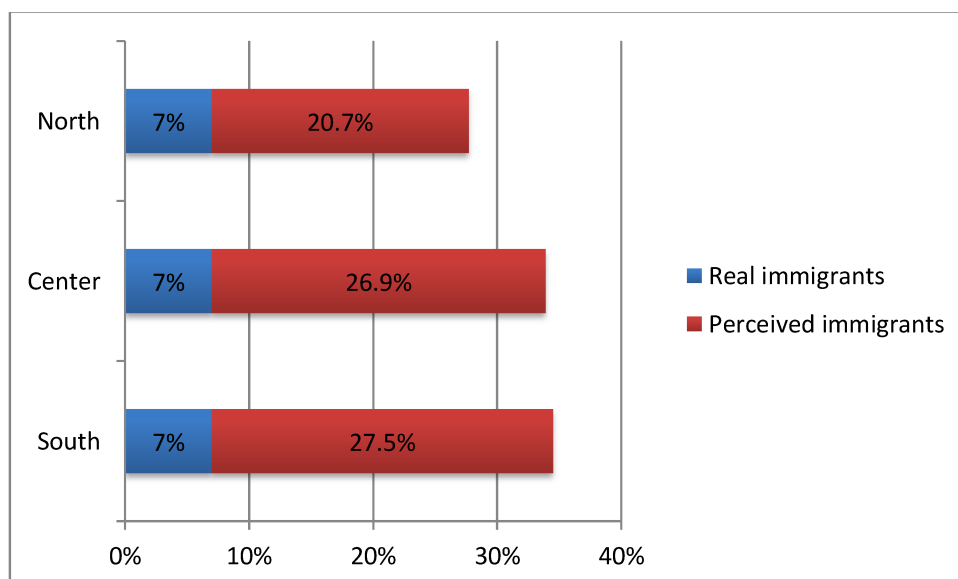


Figure 8. Real and perceived immigrants in Italy, for geographical location (%) ⁴⁰

³⁹ Source: Own elaboration based on Eurobarometer and Eurostat data.

These data are curious because they record shares of perceived immigrants which are completely opposite to reality. Paradoxically, in fact, immigrants are lower in the areas where the citizens' perception is higher and vice-versa.

This difference of perception, according to the geographical location results different even according to the characteristics of the areas of Italy and the type of municipalities.

Those who live in larger cities have a higher perception of the number of immigrants on the total population, rather than people living in smaller cities or in rural areas, registering a perception which is more in line with the reality.

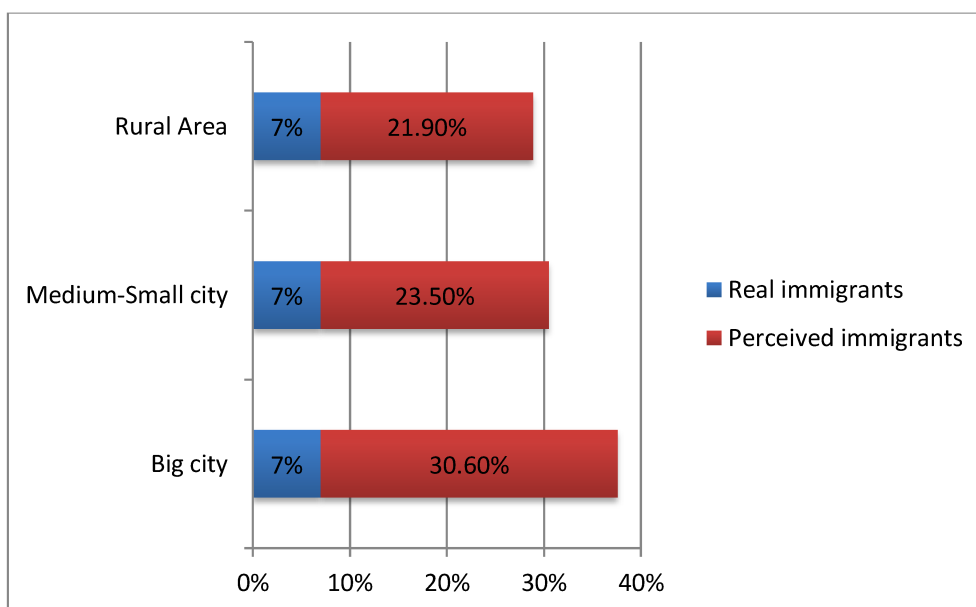


Figure 9. Real and perceived immigrants in Italy, for type of municipality (%) ⁴¹

Local citizens' perception is influenced also by the contact they have with immigrants.

However the mere interaction with them is not enough. Comparing again the case of Italy with data about Sweden, which perform quite at the opposite in the perception of the immigration on the total population and in considering it an opportunity for the Country, it stands out that in both Countries local people interact a lot with immigrants.

⁴⁰ Source: Own elaboration based on Eurobarometer and ISTAT data. The Italian macro-areas collect the regions as follows: "North" includes: Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte, Liguria and Lombardia, Veneto, Trentino Alto Adige and Friuli Venezia-Giulia. "Center": Emilia Romagna, Toscana, Marche, Umbria, Lazio, Abruzzo and Sardegna. "South": Molise, Campania, Basilicata, Calabria, Puglia, Sicilia.

⁴¹ Source: Own elaboration based on Eurobarometer and ISTAT data

“Interactions” can mean anything from exchanging a few words to doing an activity together in the neighbourhood, in the workplace, in using public services (i.e. public transportation, hospitals, local authorities services and more), at childcare centres, schools and universities, during sport, volunteering or cultural activities and when using household services ⁴².

What matters in changing the approach of the locals to the incoming people, mainly comes from if they share some bonds or, for example, if some members of their family have immigrant’s origins.

In comparing Italy with Sweden, United, Kingdom, Spain and the European average it stands out that the percentage of Italians who have immigrant friends is equal to the 27% of the respondents.

The percentage of people having immigrants as family members, instead corresponds to the 3% and it is in line with the European (EU 28) and the other Countries’ percentages.

The 4% of the locals has both friends and family members who are immigrants, while the 65% do not have any bonds with immigrants living in Italy.






Country	“Immigrant friend”	“Immigrant family member”	“Both”	“None”	“Don’t know”
ITALY 	27%	3%	4%	65%	1%
EU28 	27%	4%	9%	59%	1%
SWEDEN 	48%	4%	18%	30%	0%
UK 	37%	4%	13%	44%	2%
SPAIN 	40%	4%	14%	42%	0%

Table 5. Bonds local citizens have with immigrants (Eurobarometer) ⁴³

⁴² By analyzing the answers Italian gave to the question: “how often do you interact with immigrants?”, (defining the meaning of “interactions”) it stands out that: a 34% of the respondents “daily interacts with immigrants in one or two different contexts”, a 17% “daily interacts with immigrants in three different contexts or more”, a 24% “weekly interacts with immigrants”, a 24% “less frequently interacts with immigrants” and the remaining 2% “doesn’t know” how to reply. Analyzing the replies Swedes gave to the same question, it stands out that: a 42% of the respondents “daily interacts with immigrants in one or two different contexts”, a 10% “daily interacts with immigrants in three different contexts or more”, a 29% “weekly interacts with immigrants”, a 19% “less frequently interacts with immigrants” and that nobody (0%) “doesn’t know” how to reply.

⁴³ To measure bonds local people have with immigrants, Eurobarometer’s creator asked the following question: “Please tell me which of the following statements best applies to you? ONE ANSWER ONLY. You have friends who are

Local people who have friends, family members or both who are immigrants, tend to have less prejudices and to register a closer perception to reality, than those who do not have any bonds with them. People who have immigrants between their loved ones, indeed tend to see immigration more as an opportunity and are generally more informed about it, than the others who are not close to this topic. There is also a link between the way locals perceive the immigration and the perception of the legal and illegal immigrants living in their Country. In Countries where more respondents estimate that there are more immigrants who are staying legally in their Country, the proportions of respondents who would also perceive immigration as an opportunity is also higher.

The following graph pictures all the 28 Member States of the European Union.

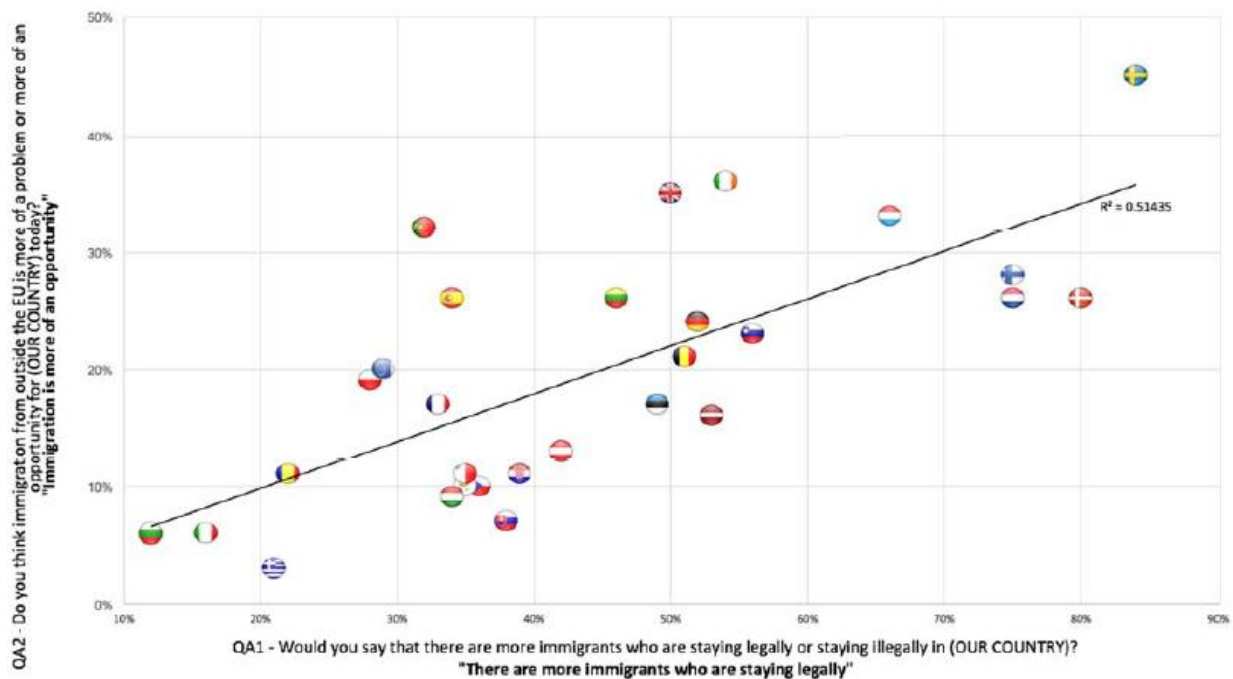


Figure 10. EU countries' perception of immigration as an opportunity, linked to illegal immigration (source: Eurobarometer)

immigrants currently living in (OUR COUNTRY). You have family members who are immigrants currently living in (OUR COUNTRY). You have both friends and family members who are immigrants currently living in (OUR COUNTRY). None. Don't know."

After Hungary, Italy is the European country with the lowest share of population who sees immigration as an opportunity. In addition the Italians have the tendency to undervalue the share of legal immigrants in Italy, and to overvalue the share of the illegal ones ⁴⁴

The following table collects the share of Italy, Sweden, Spain and UK, to compare, the situation of first Country with the others.






Country	“More legal immigrants”	“More illegal immigrants”	“About the same”	“You cannot tell”	“Don’t know”
ITALY 	16%	47%	25%	5%	7%
EU28 	39%	29%	18%	6%	8%
SWEDEN 	84%	7%	4%	1%	4%
UK 	50%	22%	10%	4%	14%
SPAIN 	34%	38%	16%	2%	10%

Table 6. Immigrants who stay legally or illegally (source: Eurobarometer)⁴⁵.

Unlike Sweden, the country with the highest percentage of respondents who consider the number of legal immigrants (84%) way higher than the illegal ones, Italy registers the highest share for perceived illegal immigrants living in their country (47%), at European level.

The wrong perception which Italians have, could be influenced by Italy’s geographic location in the Mediterranean Sea and close to the African coasts, and the distorted news spread by the media.

⁴⁴ Italy registers the highest percentage in Europe in measuring the perception of the illegal immigrants living in the Country. Source: Eurobarometer.

⁴⁵ “Generally speaking, would you say that there are more immigrants who are staying legally or staying illegally (in OUR COUNTRY)?” Eurobarometer’s respondents had to choose between the following answers: “there are more immigrants who are staying legally”, “there are more immigrants who are staying illegally”, “there is about the same number of legally and illegally staying immigrants”, “you cannot tell whether immigrants are staying legally or illegally (SPONTANEOUS)” and “don’t know”. Source: Eurobarometer, page 185.

1.3. The role of the media in shaping Italians' perception.

Media, nowadays play an important role in the construction of facts happening all around the world, both far away and in the surrounding environment. They represent, indeed a quick source of information accessible by most of the population. Consequently, they play an important role in handling immigration in Italy and elsewhere.

Through the picture they present to the audience, indeed, people use to build their idea about “the other” and what they do not directly know. What is not always remembered in doing so it is that most of the times, reality and its perception do not coincide perfectly, in particular if it is mediated by a third agent (i.e. media and social media).

To understand the perception of immigration, it is important to analyze the existing link between this phenomenon, the media and what the society thinks about it.

Eurobarometer's respondents were asked their opinion regarding how media picture immigration and how much they are important in managing integration between foreigners and local people ⁴⁶.

Table 7 reports the Italians, Swedes, English and Spanish respondents' perception, together with the European average, relative to the importance of the media in the immigrant's integration in their countries. On European scale (EU 28), Italy registers the third lowest value (33%) of people who think that media are “very important” in immigrants' integration.

The image generated by these data is that Italians may not realize how media influence the general perception of the population about the immigration issue or that, by having already some prejudices, they tend to believe to all the news they are exposed to, without wandering if the situation is truly as it is presented and getting information in a different way.

⁴⁶ Eurobarometer's question: “In your opinion, how important or not is the role of each of the media for the successful integration of immigrants?”






Country		“Very important”	“Fairly important”	“Not important”	“Don’t know”
ITALY		33%	43%	18%	6%
EU28		45%	38%	14%	3%
SWEDEN		61%	27%	12%	0%
UK		60%	25%	10%	5%
SPAIN		50%	37%	10%	3%

Table 7. "How important or not is the role of the media for the successful integration of immigrants?" (Eurobarometer)

To try to understand which picture is offered by the media, it is also interesting to analyze what people think about the way immigration is presented.

Table 8 registers the opinion that the locals have, regarding the same previous European Countries.






Country		“Objectively”	“Too positively”	“Too negatively”	“Don’t know”
ITALY		46%	12%	26%	16%
EU28		39%	12%	36%	13%
SWEDEN		32%	17%	41%	10%
UK		25%	6%	54%	15%
SPAIN		45%	9%	35%	11%

Table 8. Perception of the picture media give about immigration (Eurobarometer) ⁴⁷

Feeling knowledgeable about immigration and integration issues, and the perception that immigrants are presented too negatively in the media are somehow linked by direct proportionality.

The Countries where the proportion of respondents who feel more knowledgeable about the phenomenon is higher, register indeed higher proportions of respondents who consider that immigration is portrayed too negatively.

⁴⁷ “When matters concerning immigrants are presented in the media, do you think that they are presented too positively, in an objective way or too negatively? (source: Eurobarometer)”

From the data it stands out that in the Countries with a higher share of people who think that immigration has a positive effect on the society, there is also a higher tendency to judge the picture offered by the media in a more negative way compared to the Countries where immigration is perceived more negatively.

Comparing Italy and Sweden, the first performs worst than the European average, registering one of the lowest shares of people believing that immigration is a positive phenomenon for the local society. In Sweden, the second highest country for number of immigrants, 76% of the population considers immigration as a positive opportunity and just the 8% defines it negative.

The wrong estimate about the presence of immigrants and the “negative” perception about their effect in the society indicate a lack of public information on the issue, but they could also derive from some prejudices. Italy indeed performs at the opposite from Sweden, even regarding the NIM index ⁴⁸, which calculates the Nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-minority attitudes.

While the latter has the lowest score, registering a value equal to 1,2, Italy has the highest that corresponds to 4,1 ⁴⁹: a number that represents the largest level of hostility towards immigration and religious minorities in Europe.

As a consequence, it is possible to affirm that the error in perceiving immigration is not only the result of distorted information, but it also derives from different “visions” of the World.

By changing the approach society has in managing delicate themes, such as immigration, it also changes the observation and the perception people have on these arguments.

The high score of the NIM index in Italy and the overall perception about minorities and immigration picture a society that do not easily accept “the different”.

⁴⁸ The NIM index is elaborated by the Pew Research Center. It ranges from 0 to 10, where the higher is the value, the higher is the abatement to nationalism and the negative perception about immigration and different religions. Its calculation includes 22 individual questions that can be broadly classified into three groups — three questions on nationalism, seven questions on immigration and 12 questions probing views of religious minorities (<https://www.pewresearch.org/>).

The Pew Research Center calculated the index for 15 European countries handing out a questionnaire from April to August 2017.

⁴⁹ Relatively few people scored NIM above 5 on the scale. But there is considerable variation across Countries. In Sweden the percentage corresponded just to the 8%, the lowest amount in any Country, while in Italy people who scored from 5.01 to 10 were the 38%, registering the highest share in any Country.

Recently, a short circuit occurred in public opinion between immigration, terrorism and public order which generated an overall feeling of fear.

Insecurity is mainly caused by the media and it is used by internal dynamics as political and journalistic interests which tend to focus on some events, more than others, and to describe the facts so as to induce prejudices.

Crimes, especially when committed by immigrants, are often exposed in a more captivating way with the purpose to excite the crowd. The general sense of uncertainty that is created, spreads also the idea that these facts are frequent and that every common person could be the victim of similar events. Luckily in most of the cases, this do not subsist in the reality, inasmuch the immigrants who are also criminals correspond just to a minority which it is similar to the criminals who have local origins.

However, in the everyday life, the internet mixes and spreads a huge number of speeches that express hatred, contempt and prejudices that are produced both by institutional subjects (i.e. newspapers, televisions, publishers) and by non-professional individuals, who become themselves an information source.

These contents build up xenophobia, racism, “fear of the stranger” and negative feelings about immigration, such as the hatred for other minorities, by pointing the attention on criminals’ nationality, when it is committed by members of minorities, such as immigrants.

The overall feeling of insecurity and fear, which is generated by humanitarian tragedies and crime news, it is usually spread through social networks, blogs and online articles, but also on the TV, through political and current affairs programs.

All these sources of information tend to present the arguments in an exaggerated and distorted way, by public figures, political representatives, influencers and common people ⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Internet and social media has wiped out distances that were limiting the spread of hate speech. Distances that were far away and almost inaccessible are now only few moments away and easily reachable. Being hidden by a screen without showing their faces and being part of a group of people with the same beliefs and prejudices help people to express each kind of “ideas”, crossing the freedom of speech and reaching people all over the world. Through internet hate groups

Some extremists, in particular, take advantages of these facts and disinformation, using stereotypes⁵¹ and prejudices⁵² believed by the people, to spread their ideas and to influence others.

They act highlighting the difference and the incompatibility of lifestyle among the natives and the immigrants generating hate speech⁵³.

The latter acts as follows: it inflames the emotions of individuals by encouraging them to view themselves as members of a significant and important group, it denigrates a specified out-group and individuals who belong to that out-group, it inflicts permanent harm on the out-group, often by suggesting that they pose a threat to the in-group and, as last step, it rhetorically conquers the out-group⁵⁴.

The power of the online hate-speech consists of the ability to spread millions of racist and xenophobic expressions in few seconds. Moreover, the logic of visibility makes them an easily privileged object by the selection criterion of news. Consequently, the hate speech has become a normalized and legitimized modality to talk about complex phenomena such migration.

Despite the fact that the phenomenon of the hate speech is widely consistent in Italy and it negatively influences the perception of the citizens about immigration, there is an opposite movement that is trying to fight the first one, by giving trust to data: the “fast checking”.

It acts by fighting the fake news and the negative perceptions offered by the media, through the use of statistics and data that have the aim to demonstrate the truth about immigration.

not only spread their beliefs, but also convince other people to think as they do, recruiting them and socializing with new members to radicalize them and to encourage ethnviolence.

⁵¹ A “stereotype” is a fixed general image or set of characteristics that a lot of people believe represent a particular group of people or things. It is usually related to ethnicity, gender, beliefs and personal orientations.

⁵² A “prejudice” is defined as an irrational, preconceived opinion that leads to preferential treatment to some people and unfavourable bias or hostility against others, due to ignorance (or in direct contradiction) of facts. It literally means pre-judgment and it derives from pre-conceived and unfounded opinions.

⁵³ “Hate speech” is a verbal or written communication expressing a generalized negative opinion about a particular demographic characteristics, sometimes attacking an individual as a member of that group. Hate speech often targets particular races, genders, sexual orientations, nationalities, ethnic groups and religions and it covers all forms of expressions that spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance.

⁵⁴ To prevent and counter the spread of illegal hate speech online, in May 2016 the European Commission agreed with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and Youtube a “Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online” to help users to notify it in the social platforms. Despite social media have committed to review the majority of these requests in less than 24 hours and to remove the content, hate speech is still consistent online and social media.

Unfortunately, it has the tendency to succeed only when people are open to accept a different idea on the theme, without changing the perception of the people who continue to share the feeling of fear and rejection of the immigration. Accordingly it does not overcome the hate speech, which lately is more and more used to provide a different image from reality and to generate aversion to minorities.

In the last years Italy is divided between those who promote welcome, inspired by the values of solidarity and respect for cultures and people's rights, and those who, on the other hand, think of migrations as a considerable danger for the Country and define the first share of the population as "do-gooder". They indeed claim that Italy already needs to be helped and it cannot afford to spend more valuable resources for unnecessary issues.

Despite the several problems that characterize the Italian territory, which would need to be focused and treated more urgently, it seems that immigration represents one of the favourite topic used by the media to capture audience's attention.

The immigrants become "folk devils" who are associated to crime's episodes and are perceived as a form of evil that threatens the welfare of the local society.

They are usually indicated with terms as: "clandestine", "extra communitarian" and "irregular" which recall illegality, and also: "desperate", "shipwrecked", "refugee" and "poor", that alike do not contribute to offer a positive image and understanding of these people, which are not seen as "human beings" but as inferiors.

As the sociologist Marco Binotto ⁵⁵ sustains, the figure of the immigrants is a useful tool both in the political and in the communication worlds, because it represents a resource to get easy consensus and to generate strong emotions.

⁵⁵ M. Binotto, "Invaders, Aliens and Criminals: Metaphors and Spaces in the Media definition of Migration and Security Policies", in: E. Bond, G. Bonsaver, F. Faloppa (edited by), "Destination Italy. Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative", Bern, Peter Lang AG, 2015

“The foreigner” is presented as: “invader” or “spatial treat of the *domus*”, as it often appears in the media coverage which often represent him as an illegal immigrant without documents and which increase social insecurity by posting news of pictures relating to cross-border areas.

The second definition that is thrown to him is: “criminal”, or rather a person who deprives not only spaces to Italian people, but also of goods and services and who commits crimes. Hence in Italy there is the general perception that an increase in immigrants leads to a rise of crime. In addition, the immigrants are also linked to the concept of “aliens” as to indicate someone who contaminates the society and the culture of the Country of arrival.

Several times, indeed, mainly when media share crimes’ information committed by immigrants, they refer to the lack of respect of the Italian culture, rules and religion from incoming people.

In the recent years, immigration has been presented mainly in three different ways in Italy: the security, the humanitarian and the redemption “frames”.

It is within these frames that political actors, institutional declarations and the voices of those who participate in the immigration’s debate are placed. The latter try to attribute the responsibilities and to find solutions to the problems related to the phenomenon and to the cohabitation of the local population with the minorities.

The security frame usually presents the information related to immigration as a part of the problem, highlighting the difficult relationship between the growth of the phenomenon and the maintenance of the public order. It is mainly in this frame that there is the tendency to portray immigrants as illegal or as criminals.

In focusing on the unstoppable flow of arrivals, also, the security frame tends to offer solutions to the immigration issue which forecast: borders’ closure, tougher repatriation policies and sanctions.

The humanitarian frame, instead pictures the immigrants as victims, which are in need of help and assistance. The redemption image, rather portrays these people as independent individuals who do not show any critical issues because of their individual commitment and talent.

Another topic linked to the immigration's phenomenon, which is widely treated by media in the last years, is related to the search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean Sea. After the lodged complaints against the NGOs which were accused of having a collaboration with human traffickers in the Strait of Sicily, their reputation changed and they were involved in the development of a negative immigrants' portrait. In the Italians' perception, indeed NGOs are not anymore life-savior ships, which work as humanitarian aid, but they became crime tools.

As a consequence, a large part of the Italian population does not trust anymore the voluntary organizations which operate in this field, perceiving them as associations that just want to enrich by fostering immigrants' invasion. Humanitarian organizations, indeed, are often put in a bad light, together with black news which highlight the criminals' nationality, when it is not Italian. As a consequence, the results is a general sense of insecurity attributed to "the foreigner"⁵⁶.

To the image offered by the media, that define immigrants as illegal, criminals and as an "instrument" used by some associations to speculate and earn money, it joins the picture of "scrounger". As explained by the UNHCR, the false myths spread among the Italian population (i.e. the myth of the 35€⁵⁷), increase social friction and a negative public opinion.

Hence the stereotypical image of the immigrant is a black man, generally coming from Africa, who lives with dignity thanks to the economics support of the Italian government that protects him, despite he commits crimes, as rapes, robberies and murders.

Consequently it could be understandable that a prolonged exposure to all those news, which bomb the audience through the use a negative description and associate immigrants only with crimes, it does not help to create a good feeling between the population and to integrate them with the locals.

Despite the existence of the fast checking, indeed, media are the easiest tool used by the people to remain informed inasmuch it is almost impossible to be directly informed about everything.

⁵⁶ C. Dambone, L. Monteleone, *"La paura dello straniero. La percezione del fenomeno migratorio tra pregiudizi e stereotipi"*, (op. cit.)

⁵⁷ A large number of Italians believe that the Italian government pays €35 per day to each immigrant. This is an urban legend inasmuch the average cost for the reception of an asylum applicant or a refugee is €35 per day (or €45 for children). This is paid to the bodies managing the centres to cover salaries and maintenance. Only the "pocket money" instead, which corresponds to €2.50 per day, is given directly to refugees for their daily expenses. Source: UNHCR

As a consequence this type of information does not allow an objective consideration, free from prejudices and stereotypes.

On the contrary, the negative general description and the exploitation of immigration used to get more followers and consensus by media and politicians, generates a larger distance between the locals and the immigrants ⁵⁸. Considering above all, the fact that the Italians register the highest NIM value and wide nationalist and conservative tendencies in Europe and that the integration is already undermined by many prejudices and stereotypes ⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ C. Dambone, L. Monteleone, “La paura dello straniero. La percezione del fenomeno migratorio tra pregiudizi e stereotipi”, (op. cit.)

⁵⁹ Source: Pew Research Center. J. Diamant, K. J. Starr, “Western Europeans vary in their nationalist, anti-immigrant and anti-religious minority attitudes”, 12/06/2018, (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/06/19/western-europeans-vary-in-their-nationalist-anti-immigrant-and-anti-religious-minority-attitudes/>). A. Gonzalez-Barrera, P. Connor, “Around the World, more say immigrants are a strength than burden”, 14/03/2019, (<https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/03/14/around-the-world-more-say-immigrants-are-a-strength-than-a-burden/>)

2. FROM MINIMAL GROUP PARADIGM TO SOCIAL DOMINANCE THEORY; AN ANALYSIS OF INTRAGROUP THEORIES

As the Greek philosopher Aristotele claimed, “man is by nature a social animal” who acts both as an individual and as a member of the society. Hence the concept of identity, which can be defined as a set of characteristics that makes the individual unique and unmistakable, and therefore everything that makes him both different and similar to the others.

The main theories which explain this concept are the Identity Theories and the Categorization Theories. The firsts include the “Identity Theory” and the “Social Identity Theory”. They give similar perspectives on the dynamic mediation of the socially constructed self between individual behaviour and social structure and explain the social behaviour in terms of the reciprocal relations between the self and the society. In particular, the first is a micro-sociological theory which mainly focuses on the explanation of individuals' role-related behaviours, while the second is a social psychological theory that sets out to explain group processes and intergroup relations ⁶⁰.

Starting from the Minimal Group Paradigm, the aim of this chapter is to analyze more in detail the Social Identity Theory, firstly developed in the Fifties by Henri Tajfel ⁶¹ and then incremented with the collaboration of John Turner in the Seventies. Subsequently their works became a source of inspiration and a beginning for other social-psychologists and experimental economists, to develop the theory and to study more specific aspects.

Tajfel' scientific work was inspired by his personal experience of discrimination. He was one of the European Jews to whom the rise and the spread of fascism brutally took away lives and projects. At the end of the war he tried to understand which is the reason that causes similar atrocities and hate and he spent the rest of his life trying to understand the concept of prejudice and social discrimination against minorities.

⁶⁰ J. E. Stets, P. J. Burke, “*Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory*”, *Social Psychology Quarterly* Vol. 63, No. 3, 2000

⁶¹ H. Tajfel, M. G. Billig, R. P. Bundy, C. Flament, “*Social Categorization and intergroup behaviour*”, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1971

At the base of the Social Identity Theory there is a series of studies, developed by Tajfel, known as "studies on minimal groups". He found that merely dividing people into groups, on the basis of random factors as, for example, an artistic preference, produced the concept of in-group favouritism. The latter represents individuals' tendency to respond more positively to other people within their own group, than to individuals outside of the group. Tajfel wanted to understand the reason why people discriminate others who do not think like them, even regarding little differences.

2.1. First studies on Intergroup Relations and Minimal Group Paradigm

The Social Identity Theory (SIT), which is going to be analyzed in depth afterwards, is a social-psychological theory that tries to explain cognitions and behaviour with the help of group-processes. Its origins take place around the 60s and the 70s with the aim to understand uniformities of group behaviour.

SIT is a result of several studies on the concept of groups and on intergroup relations which are going on since the 40s in social psychology. One of the first attempts to explain group phenomena is analyzed by the psychologist John Dollard and his colleagues in their study: "Frustration and aggression" in which they deepen the concept of prejudice people's frustration and aggressiveness⁶². In brief the Frustration-aggression Theory sustained that there is a connection between frustration and aggression and that these two factors are directly proportional. In addition, if the aggressiveness cannot go towards the real source of frustration, a displacement takes over and people choose other replacement targets to get rid of the state of frustration. The latter are generally weaker and lower individuals that act as scapegoats. An example are the members of minority groups⁶³. However, this theory had a limit inasmuch it focused more on the individual's frustration and did not consider the group as a whole. After several studies, some social-psychologists realized that among the causes of the rivalry between groups there are not only material factors, but also social factors such as respect and esteem. In order to explain it, they analyzed what are the

⁶² J. Dollard, L. Doob, N. Miller, O. Mowrer, R. R. Sears, "*Frustration and aggression*", New Heaven, 1940

⁶³ R. J. Brown, "*Group processes: Dynamics within and between groups*", Oxford, 2000

minimum conditions to create intergroup discrimination. These studies were based on the “Minimal Group Paradigm” (MGP) and were fundamental to develop the Social Identity Theory.

The pioneers of the MGP were Jacob M. Rabbie, Murray Horwitz and Henry Tajfel and his colleagues. Rabbie and Horwitz (1969) conducted an experiment ⁶⁴ that took as participants some teenagers who did not previously know each other and who were randomly assigned to two different groups to take part to evaluation tests. The creators of the experiment gave the same instructions to both groups of teenagers, considering only one difference in between. While the control group did not receive anything back, they communicated to the second group that there was a reward that would have been received only from one group ⁶⁵.

It came out that, while the control group did not present any differences in the descriptions between their own subgroup and the other, the experimental group presented a more favourably atmosphere than the other group. From this experiment it came out that the bias that favour the group to which people belong is a consequence of the destiny. The introduction of the reward, and consequently the subdivision into losers and winners, generated strong changes in the status of the two groups and in attributed values to them and to other group’s members.

Tajfel and his colleagues further developed the Minimal Group Paradigm in their study: “Social categorization and intergroup behaviour” ⁶⁶, by demonstrating that different groups with no previous history and contacts present favouritism just as a consequence of the mere categorization.

In categorizing themselves into groups, people tend to distinguish between “us” and “them”, which correspond to the in-group and the out-group for him.

The present work by Tajfel et al. (1971) is going to be summarized here more in depth, inasmuch is one of the main pillars used both in social-psychology and experimental economics in developing new studies on intergroup behaviour and SIT. It was divided in two experiments which were designed as follows: the participants (Ss) had to avoid face to face interaction both with in-group

⁶⁴ J. M. Rabbie, M. Horwitz, “*Arousal of ingroup-outgroup bias by a chance win or loss*”, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1969

⁶⁵ See “Appendix”

⁶⁶ H. Tajfel, M. G. Billig, R. P. Bundy, C. Flament, “*Social Categorization and intergroup behaviour*”, (op. cit.)

and out-group members, complete anonymity had to be assured and there should not have been any links between the criteria for intergroup categorization and the nature of in-group and out-group responses, which did not have to represent utilitarian value. Participants' strategy of responding in terms of intergroup differentiation should be in competition with a strategy based on other more 'rational' and 'utilitarian' principles. In addition, the response should have been considered very important by the Ss who had to take real decisions about the distribution of concrete rewards or penalties to others.

The first experiment, that took in consideration 64 participants aged 14 to 15, tested in 8 groups, was consequently divided in two parts: the first registering inducted intergroup categorization, while in the second the categorization was assessed. In the first part the Ss were requested to estimate varying numbers of dots projected on a screen at exposure times between 1/16 and 1/2 of a second, with a total of 40 clusters. Four of the respondents' groups were assigned to the "Neutral condition", according to which the creators of the experiment communicated to the respondents that their judgements largely overestimated or underestimated the numbers of projected dots. Other four groups were instead assigned to the "Value condition" and it was told to the Ss that they responded in a more accurate way. Subsequently the participants were sent in a room with separate cubicles and were asked to allocate money, by assigning rewards and penalties to the others, without knowing their identity, but never to themselves. The reason why experiment's creators decided to exclude the self Ss in the allocation of a premium is fundamental in the MGP. It is obvious that, in case of self rewards, people would have benefited the in-group, moved by personal reward. The purpose of the experiment, instead, was to understand if Ss would have favoured the in-group members, even if they did not know each other and if the groups' division was randomly made. To do so they had to use booklets containing the following matrices repeated three times.

A	Matrix 1	-19	-16	-13	-10	-7	-4	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
		6	5	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-4	-7	-10	-13	-16	-19
	Matrix 2	12	10	8	6	4	2	0	-1	-5	-9	-13	-17	-21	-25
		-25	-21	-17	-13	-9	-5	-1	0	2	4	6	8	10	12
B	Matrix 3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
		14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
	Matrix 4	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
		5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
C	Matrix 5	-14	-12	-10	-8	-6	-4	-2	-1	3	7	11	15	19	23
		23	19	15	11	7	3	-1	-2	-4	-6	-8	-10	-12	-14
	Matrix 6	17	14	11	8	5	2	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
		-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	2	5	8	11	14	17

Figure 10. Matrices in the first experiment studied in "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour"⁶⁷

Participants' choices were distinguished into: "In-group" (I), "Out-group" (O) and "Inter-group differential" choices, or rather in the first choice both top and bottom rows stood for rewards and penalties referred to two members of the same group. In the second the chosen values were referred to two out-group members, while in the last case participants had to assign the top value to an in-group member and the bottom value to an out-group member. Considering, for example, the Matrix 1; in case of an "I choice", if the participant would select the couple of values (2; -7), it means that he would assign a reward, equal to '2', to an in-group member and a penalty '-7' to another member of the same group. In case of an "O-choice", it would happen the same, but the values '2' and '-7' would be allocated to two out-group members while, in an "Inter-group differential choice", the Ss would assign a value that is equal to '2' to an in-group member and '-7' to an out-group member. It is not obvious that the participant chooses a positive value for an in-group member and a negative one for a person outside his group. Depending on the situation, in fact, even if it is considered a rare episode, he could decide to choose a negative value for his group and a positive one for the out-group, as it would happen in the case he would choose, for example, the couple of values (-16; 5), in Matrix 1.

⁶⁷ Source: "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory" (op. Cit.)

Matrices were also differentiated in: “Type A”, in which the maximum penalties overpass the minimum rewards and the two middle terms represent the maximum point payoff (MJP) and the maximum fairness. “Type B” does not contains penalties, it has a constant joint payoff and a maximum fairness which corresponds to the middle terms of the matrices, while in “Type C” the maximum rewards exceeds maximum penalties, the MJP is at the extremes and the maximum fairness in the two middle terms of the matrices. The results of the first experiments showed that the introduction of an in-group/out-group dichotomy in the D choices determined competitive choices favouring the in-group members, and creating a discriminatory behaviour.

The second experiment, which was also split in two parts, followed the path of the previous one and had the aim to validate its results by using a different intergroup categorization and to explore the relative ‘pull’ exerted on the Ss intergroup decisions by introducing new variables.

The creators took in consideration: the “maximum joint payoff” (MJP), which represents the choice in a matrix which results in the greatest possible common benefit to the two individuals to whom the choice pertains, the “maximum in-group payoff” (MIP), which equals the highest number of points awarded to the member of the in-group, and the “maximum difference in favour of the in-group” (MD), which stands for the greatest possible difference between points awarded to the individuals to whom the choice pertains, this difference being in favour of the in-group member.

To do this experiment were used 48 boys aged as before who attended the same school. They were tested in three groups of 16 members and they were categorized in terms of an aesthetic preference.

Participants were asked to choose between 12 coloured slides, 6 of which representing reproductions of paintings made by Klee and 6 by Kandinsky. These were shown in 12 successive pairs and in different combinations composed either of paintings by both painters or by the same author. The participants were asked to fill the following matrices:

Type A	Matrix 1	19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7	I	O	I	O
		1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 23 25	O	I	I	O
	Matrix 2	23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11	I	O	I	O
		5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 23 25 27 29	O	I	I	O
Version	I	: MIP and MD opposite to MJP				
Version	O	: MIP, MJP and MD coincide				
Type B	Matrix 3	7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19	I	O	I	O
		1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 23 25	O	I	I	O
	Matrix 4	11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	I	O	I	O
		5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19 21 23 25 27 29	O	I	I	O
Version	I	: MIP and MJP opposite to MD				
Version	O	: MIP, MJP and MD coincide				

Figure 11. Matrices in the second experiment studied in "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour"⁶⁸

Even in the case of the second experiment, the results showed the participants' tendency to favour in-group members. Figure 3 shows the numbers of Ss in terms of distributions of their responses in the 16 presentations of the 'new' matrices involving intergroup choices. Despite the participants were 48, data are based on 47 responses, because one person misunderstood the instructions.

	No. of Ss with majority of responses favouring own group	No. of Ss with equal numbers of both types of responses	No. of Ss with majority of responses favouring other group
	34	4	9
%	72.3	8.5	19.2

Figure 12. Ss' responses in terms of distribution⁶⁹

When they had to choose between acting in terms of maximum utilitarian advantages to all (MJP) combined with maximum utilitarian advantage to members of their own group (MIP) as against having their group win on points at the sacrifice of both these advantages, it is the winning that seems more important to them.

What Tajfel and his colleagues demonstrated with this experiment is that participants clearly tended to assign higher rewards to the members of their own group rather than to the others, despite they

⁶⁸ Source: "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory" (op. Cit.)

⁶⁹ Source: "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory" (op. Cit.)

did not know each other from before. In addition, in order to establish a maximum difference between their own group and the other, they were willing to renounce to the maximum possible profit and gain. It was thus shown that a simple social categorization, which is defined as a simple and pure perception of a subject to be part of a group with respect to another, was sufficient to produce an intergroup discrimination in which people tended to favour the group they belong to ⁷⁰.

2.2 Intergroup Bias and Social Categorization

Tajfel' studies on Minimal Group Paradigm consider the "intergroup bias" as an assumption. This concept is defined as people's tendency to favour or to positively define their membership to a group and the other members of the in-group more positively than other groups and out-group members, as a consequence of distorted perceptions⁷¹. As demonstrated in the social-psychological literature, from older studies as: "Social categorization and Intergroup behaviour: does minimal intergroup discrimination make social identity more positive?"⁷², "Social categorization, Intergroup behaviour and Self-esteem: two experiments"⁷³, or "In-group bias in the Minimal Intergroup Situation: a cognitive-motivational analysis"⁷⁴, to more recent ones as: "Minimal Group Paradigm: an intergroup dynamic study"⁷⁵, people tend to favour in-group members both when groups have history and when it does not exist previous conflict or competition. Intergroup bias act as in-group favouritism and out-group derogation. The latter operates through discriminative behaviours toward the out-group, through prejudiced attitudes, and stereotyped cognitions.

Moreover, studies on MGP affirm that intergroup bias exists even in a minimal groupness condition, which categorizes groups in a random way, excluding no self-interest and no competition

⁷⁰ P. Musso, "Per una politica europea di governance. Sviluppo dell'identità europea e strategie di comunicazione", Palermo, 2011

⁷¹ H. Tajfel, "Social psychology of intergroup relations", Annual Review of Psychology, Bristol, 1982

⁷² P. J. Oakes, J. C. Turner, "Social categorization and Intergroup behaviour: does minimal intergroup discrimination make social identity more positive?", European Journal of Social Psychology, 1980

⁷³ M. A. Hogg, J. C. Turner, C. Nascimento-Schulze, D. Spriggs, "Social Categorization, Intergroup Behaviour and Self-Esteem: two experiments", Revista de Psicología Social, 1986

⁷⁴ M. B. Brewer, "In-Group Bias in the Minimal Group Situation: a Cognitive-Motivational Analysis", Psychological Bulletin, Santa Barbara, 1979

⁷⁵ B. M. Groen, "Minimal Group Paradigm: An Intergroup Dynamics Study", 2019

for resources . Just the simple awareness of some kind of distinction between individuals indeed, motivates them to perform discriminative attitudes and behaviour .

Three are the processes that create the in-group and out-group mentality: social categorization, social comparison and self-esteem ⁷⁶.

Social categorization represents the idea to be part of a group. Once people do that, they compare themselves with the others. By knowing what categories people belong to, they can understand things about themselves and define the appropriate behaviour according to their belonging group. After categorizing themselves within a group and identifying themselves as members, people tend to compare the in-group and the out-group. To maintain their self-esteem, people tend to favour their group and to have a better idea of it. This is what causes prejudices and discrimination against out-group's members who are seen in a negative way. Self-esteem, instead wants to understand if a person is better, or worst, than other people. People, indeed want to be seen as better off, to feel better ⁷⁷.

In-group and out-group favouritisms and discriminations do not only pop up in social-psychological experiments, such as the one related to MGP. They instead appear in people's daily life inasmuch society is differentiated in groups, and their members behave according to the principles of the social categorization and of the social identity.

The term "categorization" can be defined as the tendency to group people, objects and events in homogeneous sets that can be treated as total entities. When it refers to the social perception, it is called "social categorization" and it is defined as the process through which people are identified as members of a social group that shares certain typical characteristics.

Since ancient times human beings acted by categorizing surrounding things and other individuals. Some psychologists suggest that this is an intrinsic phenomenon, which happens as a consequence of the world's variation and complexity, while others define it as an useful tool which allows people

⁷⁶ "Introduction to Social Identity Theory", source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tf5_gWa3h2g

⁷⁷ Source: "Introduction to Social Identity Theory", (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tf5_gWa3h2g&t=1s)

to master the surrounding environment and to act in an efficient way in the society. As a matter of fact it provides useful information which are not easy to perceive immediately and help individuals to ignore useless information ⁷⁸. Categorization strengthens intra-group similarities between the members of the same category and, at the same time, increases the pre-existing differences between the different groups. Consequently, as it was affirmed by Tajfel, the social categorization generates the general idea between the participants that group members are more similar to each other than it would happen in a situation with no categorization, both when the existing differences are arbitrary or triggered. At the same time the intergroup differences are exaggerated. As a matter of fact, it stands out that, when people analyze intergroup similarities and differences, it is easier for them to notice the diversities and then to favour their group instead of others ⁷⁹.

The social identity, instead, represents a part of the image an individual offers of himself, and it derives from the awareness of belonging to a social group, combined with the value and emotional significance associated with that belonging. Therefore the social identity is a tool used by an individual to describe limited aspects of his image, relevant to limited social behaviours and to define his place in the society.

People define themselves in several ways and in different aspects through their membership in one or more groups in the society. Individuals' belonging to a group can change in time.

They indeed have the tendency to remain members of a group and try to join new ones until they can contribute positively to their image and social identity. When a group does not meet this requirement anymore, the individuals tend to abandon it. This happens as a consequence of the people's need to obtain a satisfying image of themselves and to offer it to other members of the surrounding society.

⁷⁸ J. S. Bruner, "*On perpetual readiness*", Psychological Review, 1957

⁷⁹ J. Krueger, M. Rothbart, "*Contrast and accentuation effects in category learning*", Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1990

2.3. Social Identity Theory

Studies on MGP and on categorization fail in accounting the motivations that drive individuals to intergroup discrimination attitudes: it does not explain why people always favour their own group and why they stereotype the out-group and discriminate its members.

As a consequence, Tajfel developed his studies on minimum groups, and elaborated an integrative theory of intergroup conflict defined as “Social Identity Theory”.

The latter was mainly developed to produce a non-reductionist explanation of inter-group relations and group processes, as it happened in the previous studies in social psychology.

The identity does not only derive from the knowledge of people’s membership within a group, but also from an emotional component generated by people’s feelings and excitement of being a member of it. Social identity, together with the personal identity represents a hypothetical cognitive structure and they jointly represent most of the self-concept. Subsequently each component is characterized by more restricted cognitive elements such as particular social categorizations of sex, nationality, political affiliation, religion, and personal characteristics.

As previously anticipated, all the identifications in different groups which are used by the people to define themselves in the society create their social identity ⁸⁰.

The key concept of the SIT is defined as “an individual’ self-concept which derives from being a member of a social group together with the value and the emotional significance attached to his membership” ⁸¹. Or rather, the members of a group embody group membership to their self-concepts and judge themselves and the others depending on their belonging to specific associations ⁸².

The psychologist Naomi Ellemers, together with her colleagues, in fact defines the social identification as the way people describe and label themselves and how others see them, depending

⁸⁰ H. Tajfel, “*Social identity and intergroup relations*”, Cambridge, 1982

⁸¹ H. Tajfel, “*Differentiation between social groups: Studies in the social psychology of inter-group relations*”, London, 1978

⁸² H. Tajfel, J. C. Turner, “*The social identity theory of intergroup behavior*”, in S. Worchel and W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations*, Chicago, 1986

on their membership of a group, or on the social category they belong to⁸³. As a consequence, the SIT that people act in accordance with other members of the group when they strongly identify themselves with the in-group⁸⁴.

In categorizing themselves in different groups, people have the need to reach and maintain a positive social identity. As a consequence, they try to belong to positively valued groups based on social comparison. The results are distorted opinions and comparisons, so that the group to which individuals belong is valued more positively than the other groups to which they do not belong. In this regard Tajfel talked about establishing a positive specificity of the in-group with respect to the out-group⁸⁵. The individuals' motivation to derive a positive self-esteem from group memberships is one of the forces that lead to more favourable distortions of the internal group ". In addition both the in-group favouritism and the attitudes of discrimination for the out-group are linked to the concept of SIT.

The conceptual core of SIT can be summarized as follows: it exists a natural cognitive process of distortion which influences people's judgments and beliefs.

Individuals strongly identify themselves as members of the social categories to which they belong, based on characteristics such as gender, nationality, race and social class. In the case when one of these categories becomes salient, people's cognitive distortion reduces the intra-categorical differences and accentuates the inter-categorical differences. In addition, when a group becomes salient for the individuals it is usually the result of a positive image it shows in the society and a tool to increase their self-esteem. Consequently, in constructing the in-group and the out-group's representation, the first is favoured while the second is subjected to a discrimination process.

⁸³ N. Ellemers, N. Wilke, A. Van Knippenberg, "Effects of the legitimacy of low group or individual status on individual and collective status-enhancement strategies", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1993

⁸⁴ H. Tajfel, J. C. Turner, "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict", in S. Worchel, and W. G. Austin (Eds.), *The Social psychology of intergroup relations*, Monterey, 1979

⁸⁵ H. Tajfel, "Differentiation between social groups: Studies in social psychology of intergroup relations", (op. cit.)

2.4. Self-Categorization Theory

The Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), was developed by Tajfel and Turner in the late Eighties with the aim to understand, explain and predict how people think of themselves, feel and act as members of a social group. It consists in a set of assumptions and hypotheses on the functioning of the concept of the self in the society, or rather the concept of the self based on the comparison with other people and with relevant aspects in social interaction⁸⁶. In other words, the theory explains when a group of people comes to be perceived as a group.

As the SIT, the SCT came from the results obtained by Tajfel's experiments on minimal groups, according to which the mere social categorization in in-group and out-group, excluding all variables associated with the formation of social groups and negative intergroup attitudes was sufficient to generate discrimination and favouritism for the group.

As showed in the previous paragraph, related to the MGT, the participants involved in the experiments had the tendency to assign more resources to the members of the in-group and acted in a way to maximize the difference between in-group and out-group, despite the fact that they had to renounce to a profit maximization for their group.

Starting from the same assumptions, while the SIT had the aim to explain why the participants acted in this way, the SCT wanted to understand which was the reason why participants identified themselves in groups characterized by such a minimal condition and to explain the processes by which people form cognitive representations of themselves and others in relation to different social groups.

The conceptual core of the SCT can be summarized as follows. People are characterized by multiple identities related to the personal, the social and the general level⁸⁷. These levels are accessible depending on the social context and on a cognitive process which follows a meta-contrast principle.

⁸⁶ J. C. Turner, M. A. Hogg, P. J. Oakes, S. D. Reicher, M. S. Wetherell, "*Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*", Oxford, 1987

⁸⁷ P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, E. T. Higgins, "*Self-Categorization Theory*", SAGE Publications Ltd, London, 2012

The latter affirms that the categorization is activated at a hierarchy level that maximizes inter-categorical differences and minimizes intra-categorical differences.

In a situation where there is only one in-group, the self-categorization is activated on a personal level and the perceived heterogeneity of the in-group is high, while, in a situation which presents both the in-group and the out-group, the self-categorization is activated on a social level and both the perceived homogeneity of the groups and the heterogeneity between the two groups are high.

In its hypothesis the SCT takes in consideration even the group' status. When the in-group has low status or is a minority group and its members have the perception to be threatened by an out-group with a higher or majority status, the group homogeneity increases in order to protect the cohesion and the integrity of the in-group .In addition, the content of the in-group and out-group' stereotypes can change as a consequence of the changes in the environment and the different context in which the group is located ⁸⁸.

2.5. A comparison between the Social Identity Theory and the Self-Categorization Theory

As mentioned above, the Social Identity theory and the Self-Categorization Theory are essential to explain the intergroup behaviour in social psychology.

The SCT is considered an extension of Tajfel' SIT, but it diverges from it, inasmuch the primary focus is on the understanding of the cognitive process of categorization, and not on its effects ⁸⁹.

Through the social identity the individuals acquire a collective awareness of themselves as a social entity and tend to perceive and to define themselves as a group and to share a common identity ⁹⁰.

The Social Identity Theory and the Self Categorization Theory define the social groups differently. While the SIT emphasizes motivational factors, the SCT takes in consideration a more strictly cognitive and perceptive aspects of the social situation. As a consequence, the two theories have a discordant interpretation about the relationship between group distinctiveness and in-group bias and

⁸⁸ J. C. Turner, K. J. Reynolds, "*Self-Categorization Theory*", The Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology, SAGE publications Ltd., London, 2012

⁸⁹ J. D. Halldorson, "*An Exploration of Tajfel's Social Identity Theory and its Application to Understanding Métis as a Social Identity*", Winnipeg, 2009

⁹⁰ H. Tajfel, J. Turner, "*The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour*", (op. cit.)

generate different results. As Tajfel and Turner, and subsequently other psychologists who developed their theories, affirmed in one of their works ⁹¹, the Social Identity Theory focuses on the principle that group's members have the tendency to seek distinctiveness by considering the group as different and better than other groups. As a result of this hypothesis, the intergroup similarity is perceived as a threat and pushes the group to create some kind of distinction and to protect and implement all the characteristics that differentiate the in-group from the out-group.

Differently from the SIT, the Self Categorization Theory focuses on the hypothesis that social categories are more likely to be perceived as separate and distinct entities until the intergroup difference is greater than the intra-group difference. In this case, both the intergroup and the intra-group differences are considered and the intergroup similarity is considered a threat that makes more difficult to perceive the in-group and the out-group as separate entities.

Taking in consideration the paper "Social categorization and intergroup behaviour" ⁹², it stands out that the social identity appears in all the experiments developed by Tajfel and his colleagues. In the first experiment it stands out when the participants show preferences for their group, in "intergroup differential choices". When, indeed, the participants have to assign a reward or a penalty to two other participants both from the in-group or from the out-group, the results are the same and the in-group perception did not change people's behaviour. In the second experiment it happens the same, or rather that the participants have the tendency to favour the in-group, but, consequently to the introduction of new variables: MJP, MIP and MD, it does not represent their main goal. As a matter of fact, together with favouring their group, participants act with the aim to maximize intergroup differences. To do so, they adopt some strategies, despite the fact that they are conscious to have other options, even if it means to assign a smaller value to their group, to achieve a broader final difference between the groups.

⁹¹ H. Tajfel, J. Turner, "*The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour*", (op. cit.)

⁹² H. Tajfel, M. G. Billig, R. P. Bundy, C. Flament, "*Social Categorization and intergroup behaviour*", (op. cit.)

In brief, despite the two theories seem to be similar to one another and based on analogous principles, the SIT and the SCT are based on different hypotheses in the case of an increment, or a decrease, of the distinctiveness between two groups, linked to a positive differentiation. From one hand, the Social Identity Theory describes the intergroup similarity as a threat to group identity and aims to increase the group bias as a strategy to restore differentiation. On the other hand, the Self Categorization Theory affirms that the members of a group tend to act more in terms of their own group membership when the in-group is clearly distinguishable from the out-group, showing a greater in-group bias.

2.6. Intergroup discrimination and Social Dominance Theory

Studies in the social-psychological and in the experimental economic literature have widely demonstrated that, in an intergroup situation, people tend to favour their own group and to define it as better than the other groups. In-group identification is the principal factor which generates discriminative attitudes and behaviour towards out-group's members. The higher people's identification and commitment to their groups, the more they act, feel and think, in terms of the way that the in-group is reflecting. As a consequence, in "Effects of contact, conflict, and social identity or interethnic group hostilities"⁹³, Tzeng and Jackson (1994) demonstrated that groups with a higher identification between the members, have the tendency to discriminate the out-groups more than the ones who are characterised by a low group identification.

Despite the fact that there is the tendency to believe that only majority groups, with a higher social status adopt discriminatory attitudes towards the members of a minority out-group, this is not completely true. Intergroup discrimination, indeed, is not a one-way phenomenon but it is also performed by minority groups, who discriminate majority groups to compensate their sense of

⁹³ O. C. Tzeng, J. W. Jackson, "*Effects of contact, conflict, and social identity on interethnic group hostilities*", International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 1994

insecurity and to try to increase their social identity⁹⁴. On the contrary, some studies⁹⁵ demonstrated that in some discriminative situations, the members of the minorities feel a stronger identification with their group, probably as a consequence of insecurity they experiment.

Generally, majority groups tend to register more members and to be more powerful in the society, while the minority groups are composed by fewer members and are usually powerless as, for example, religious minorities, immigrants and refugees. Another result which stands out is that discrimination behaviours are always glanced by members' perception of this phenomenon. From those studies, in fact, was visible that minority members, which are constantly treated as inferior and oppressed, are more likely to perceive themselves as targets of discrimination and stereotyping. Furthermore, they tend to label any negative action which out-group members perform against their group as a discriminative behaviour.

Around the Nineties, following the MGP, the SIT and the studies on intergroup behaviour in social-psychology started to be developed the Social Dominance Theory (SDT)⁹⁶ as a tool to explain the persistent inequalities of groups based on gender, race and other social categorization. The theory is based on the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO): a personality variable which analyses people's social and political attitudes and their propensity in justifying and maintains inequality in the society. This variable is strongly correlated with the concepts of prejudices and discrimination towards out-group's members and increases inequality and all the negative feelings and opinions between groups⁹⁷. Contrariwise, from the social-psychological literature, stands out that there is no correlation between the SDO and inequality's reduction between groups, as for example the group of the locals and the group of immigrants. As a consequence, when people register a high SDO,

⁹⁴ B. Simon, B. Aufderheide, C. Kampmeier, "*The social psychology of minority-majority relations*", in R. Brown & S. Gaertner (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Intergroup processes*, Berlin, 2001

⁹⁵ B. Mullen, R. Brown, C. Smith, "*Ingroup bias as a function of salience, relevance, and status: an integration*", *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1992

⁹⁶ G. Islam, "*Social Dominance Theory*", Grenoble, 2014

⁹⁷ F. Pratto, "*The puzzle of continuing group inequality: Piecing together psychological, social, and cultural forces in social dominance theory*", in M. P. Zanna (Eds.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, New York, 1999

they usually tend to be conservative, racist and to show many prejudices and little empathy for minority group's members⁹⁸.

Studies which analyse the SDO variable showed that men usually have higher values than women. In addition, even in minimal group experiments the members with a higher SDO registered a higher favouritism for their group a lack of cooperation with the members of the out-group and an increment of discriminative behaviours toward the latter.

SIT and SDT agree that, in an intergroup situation where is registered a high level of SDO, people tend to show a higher discrimination towards the out-group. However, while the SIT sustains that out-group's discrimination is carried out from the in-group to maintain a positive social identity, the SDO affirms that discriminative behaviours are the tool used by in-group's members to maintain a superior group position.

To sum up, the mere in-group favouritism cannot fully explain discriminative behaviour, but only the fact that, as affirmed by the SIT, it is impossible to avoid in-group bias. It is for this reason that, in understanding the intergroup discrimination, also the SDT plays an important role. The latter affirms that intergroup discrimination behaviours, with the aim to dominate, insult, and oppress the members of the out-group, are mainly generated by a high SDO and are the result of the people's need to be member of social groups based hierarchies⁹⁹.

⁹⁸ J. Sidanius, F. Pratto, "*Social Dominance*", Cambridge, 1999

⁹⁹ J. Sidanius, F. Pratto, "*The inevitability of oppression and the dynamics of social dominance*", in P. M. Sniderman, P. E. Tetlock & E. G. Carmines (Eds.), "*Prejudice, politics and the American dilemma*", Stanford, 1993

3. IMMIGRATION IN ITALY AND SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

Previously it was analyzed the perception of immigration in Italy and the social-psychological theories that define people's identities in an intergroup situation.

This chapter has the aim to link these theories with the perception, the Italians have about incoming migrants and people belonging to different cultural groups.

As showed in Chapter 1, Italian population has the most distorted perception about migrants' incidence on the total citizens in their own Country, and has also a fairly negative opinion about immigration. As a consequence, there is the tendency by local citizens to act through discrimination against the incoming people. Several are the causes of discriminative behaviours, but a huge factor that generates them is represented by prejudices and stereotypes.

A definition of prejudice widely used in the literature, that include both weak and subtle forms of discrimination, is given by the psychologist Thomas Fraser Pettigrew ¹⁰⁰, according to which prejudice can be defined as "an antipathy accompanied by a faulty generalization".

Conceptually, "prejudice" is different from "discrimination", inasmuch the first refers to a generalized judgment, generally negative, that precedes the actual experience, while the second represents an action that tends to damage, or to privilege, a subject in a particular context. However, some empirical studies use the two terms as synonyms since it is demonstrated that people who tend to have prejudices also tend to have discriminatory attitudes ¹⁰¹.

Discrimination and prejudices, in some cases, lead to phenomena of racism and xenophobia. Racism mainly derives from an intergroup comparison, based on moral judgement, which is generated by the perceptions that people have about the group they belong to and external groups. The main cause of this feeling is the fact that out-group's members are considered inferior to the in-group's ones, for some reasons linked to cultural or biological factors. Differently, the xenophobia, as it says the term itself, comes from an unjustified phobia generated by something different and

¹⁰⁰ T. F. Pettigrew, *"The sociology of race relations: Reflection and reform"*, New York, 1980

¹⁰¹ B. Mazzara, *"Stereotipi e pregiudizi"*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1997

unknown. Xenophobic attitudes, in fact, are characterized by the perception that the others constitute a danger to people and community's security ¹⁰².

Those attitudes mainly appear when two, or more, different groups coexist in the same society and are often experienced by the immigrants, despite their nationality and the welcoming Country. As already mentioned in the second chapter, social psychology considers the belonging to a group and the intergroup differences fundamental in the construction of individuals' identity. The identity definition process is developed through the following steps: the context of comparison, the significance of the roles and groups to which individuals belong and the external reference group. Every person, indeed, builds his identity depending on the role played in the society and on the different social and cultural categories he belongs to. In addition, as affirmed by social psychology, people have the tendency to identify themselves with a positive group and to be proud to belong to a majority group, while it is not the same for a minority group's member. As a consequence, local people belong to the majority group, while immigrants represent the minority. The integration is not always easy and it happens through the social psychological process of assimilation, which involves an active negotiation of identities by immigrants and members of the host society. The latter, indeed, could be a struggle in the definition of the self and the others, inasmuch it takes place in a non-neutral context, where immigrants and members of the host society start on different footing and with tools. Rather, the dominant "host" group controls most cultural resources in the society. This gives to the in-group's members more power to construct and disseminate images and ideas about the people in the society and the positions that they should cover, assigning higher and more remunerable positions to the locals and lower ones to the immigrants.

From foreigners' perspective, the pervasive patterns of prejudice and stereotyping, and the belonging to a minority group, means that the local people in the new country have the tendency to see them not as individuals, but as members of groups about whom beliefs and attitudes have

¹⁰² V. Bello, *“La crisi dell'identità sociale tra pregiudizi, xenofobie e razzismi. L'inclusione dell'altro in tempo di crisi in Italia e Spagna”*, Firenze, 2015

already formed. Thus, the efforts they need to define themselves require them to respond to general negative images and expectations and make the integration process even harder ¹⁰³. The assimilation depends also on the out-group's characteristics and the behavioural attitudes of its members.

Among the external groups, in fact, some are more relevant than others, and through the groups' comparison, individuals distinguish closer and friendlier, or more extraneous and conflicting groups, depending on how many aspects the in-group has in common with the out-group.

However, these mechanisms that are at the basis of the comparison are not by themselves the cause of discriminatory attitudes. The latter are generated by a discriminative trigger which alters a normal process of confrontation, by vitiating it through prejudices against out-group's members. People's perception about external groups depends on the different realities in which they play different roles. Taking a European citizen as example: if the individual is situated in a European reference context, he would have the tendency to position his identity at national level and to consider people of different nationalities as members of external reference groups. If the individual refers to his national context, instead, he would tend to place his identity at the local level and other sub-national reference groups as out-groups. On the contrary, in an international context, outside Europe, he would have the tendency to identify himself with the European level and to differentiate others as coming from different regions of the world, such as: Asia, Africa, North and South America. This explains why, as affirmed by Ribas-Mateos in his study: "How can we understand immigration in Southern Europe?" ¹⁰⁴, in Countries where the national identity is strong, as it is in Italy, there is a higher tendency that the locals act differently and discriminate people with different nationalities. However, when the European identity is even stronger, the prejudice is mostly activated against "non-EU" immigrants. The diversity between the local and the immigrant population from a non-European country is larger than the one between people coming from different EU countries. They, in fact, differentiate from others not only for the language, but also for

¹⁰³ E. R. Cabaniss, A. E. Cameron, "Toward a Social Psychological Understanding of Migration and Assimilation", 2018

¹⁰⁴ N. Ribas-Mateos, "How can we understand immigration in Southern Europe?", Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 2004

religious beliefs, habits, skin colour and migration's reasons. As already seen in Chapter 1, several are the "push" and the "pull" factors that generate migration flows. Immigrants escaping from persecutions, war, environmental disasters and poverty, mainly coming from Africa, are certainly seen in a different way than white European immigrants, who mainly migrate for work. In fact, they are usually poorer than intra-EU migrants, escape from persecutions, and therefore they tend to integrate themselves in the society in a more difficult way, because of a greater cultural difference and because of the recent endured traumas and, in addition, they are seen as illegal immigrants. As a consequence, the larger is the cultural difference between the locals and the incoming people, the larger is the intergroup bias and the threat locals feel by the latter. This general perception of insecurity and dread mainly derives from poor information and uncertainty the Italians have about immigrants, which they usually get much through the mass media ¹⁰⁵.

Social psychology widely studied people's identity and intergroup relations, from different groups which are characterized by important cultural factors, to the ones based on minimal classification. Migration sets in motion processes that deeply affect people and their identities ¹⁰⁶.

3.1. A link between Social Psychology and Immigration

SIT emphasizes conscious selection processes, psychological motivations, and individual choices ¹⁰⁷. In an intergroup situation, where the groups belong to different cultures and ethnicities, it includes ethno-racial identities, which are seen as self-schemas to reply to the question: "Who am I?" and to simplify the self and the others' categorization and identification ¹⁰⁸. Through Social Identity, then, people categorize themselves and others, but also are categorized by members of an out-group.

¹⁰⁵ T. Brader, N. A. Valentino, E. Suhay, "What triggers public opinion on immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat", *American Journal of Political Science*, 2008

¹⁰⁶ T. Brader, N. A. Valentino, E. Suhay, "What triggers public opinion on immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat", (op. cit.)

¹⁰⁷ H. Tajfel, J. C. Turner, "The social identity theory of intergroup behavior", (op. cit.)

¹⁰⁸ T. Brader, N. A. Valentino, E. Suhay, "What triggers public opinion on immigration? Anxiety, Group Cues, and Immigration Threat", (op. cit.)

In the process of categorization, people have the basic need to perceive themselves in a more positive way than other groups' members. This is an essential step to build people's identity, which widely derives from membership in one or more groups ¹⁰⁹.

Consequently, people are seen as constantly involved in social comparison's processes between the groups they belong to and the external ones. When the outcome of these comparisons is positive, people are expected to feel good about themselves and their group membership. When, instead, the outcome is negative, they may feel badly about both, acting through less visible behaviour of identification ¹¹⁰. In an intergroup comparison, the behaviour of group's members is influenced by the out-group they are related with. As a matter of fact, group's members may feel more advantaged or disadvantaged than others, depending on their ethnic group and the one of and other members ¹¹¹. In the paper "Intergroup identification as the inclusion of in-group in the self" ¹¹², the authors, who chose Latin Americans, Black and White students from a college in the United States, as a sample for their experiment, demonstrated that the Latinos considered themselves in a disadvantaged situation with respect to white students, but, at the same time, they felt more advantaged than black ones. The same happens for immigrants in a new Country. They usually have the tendency to feel in a lower position than local people, but they also tend to perceive themselves as luckier than people still living in their native Country ¹¹³.

The same could be applied to the Italian situation where the incoming Albanians and other immigrants from Eastern Europe, who represent the principal groups towards whom the Italians had prejudices in the 90s, are still in a disadvantaged position compared to more recent immigrants, coming from African and/or Muslim Countries.

¹⁰⁹ H. Tajfel, *"Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology"*, Cambridge, 1981

¹¹⁰ H. Tajfel, *"Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology"*, (op. cit.)

¹¹¹ I. Walker, T. Pettigrew, *"Relative Deprivation Theory: An overview and conceptual critique"*, British Journal of Social Psychology, 1984

¹¹² L. Tropp, W. Stephen, "Ingroup Identification as the Inclusion of Ingroup in the Self", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1999

¹¹³ K. Deaux, *"To Be an Immigrant"*, New York, 2006

In Chapter 1 the problem of immigration in Italy was discussed mainly by using data from the Eurobarometer, the ISTAT and the Eurostat databases. The intergroup discrimination stands out since the Eurobarometer's question, related to the perception the Italians have about immigrants' presence in the society. Almost a half of the respondents (46%) affirmed to have a total negative perception about it, while the 51% affirmed to think about the immigration as a problem.

Data also showed that the Italians tend to think about immigration as a negative factor for the economy of the Country, to have the large perception that immigrants take away jobs from the locals and, in addition, they register the second highest percentage of people linking immigration to a rise of crime. These results show a bias between the general perception and the real data about immigration in Italy.

The Italians tend to register one of the largest distorted perceptions about immigration. This is a result of a warped image showed by the television and the mass media, which uses the fear and the threat from what is "different" to attract a greater audience, and also of people's identity which is endangered by people with non-familiar characteristics. Italy, in addition, registers the highest value for the NIM index in Europe, showing the image of a Country with high Nationalist tendencies, and a prevalence of anti-immigrant and anti-minority attitudes. Accordingly, considering the Italians as in-group's members and immigrants with different nationalities as out-group's members, the first have a positive perception of themselves and show tendencies that accentuate their uniqueness and the differences with others. This shows how the SIT and the SCT are linked to the Italians' perception of immigration. In the process of self categorization, in fact, people consider to be a member of a social group together with the value and the emotional significance attached to his membership. The Nationalist tendencies, the desire to protect the culture of their own Country and the small openness to integration towards immigrants, in fact, are signals that show Italians' strong attachment to their in-group. The SCT, in addition, shows how the prejudices and the stereotypes that local people have about immigrants, which mainly arise from a general disinformation and a distorted image offered by the mass media, enlarge out-group bias and do not help intergroup

communication and integration. As the social psychology affirms, in fact, the greater is the perception of belonging to a group and the disinformation about others, the greater is the intergroup bias.

Even the SDT can be linked to the “problem” of immigration in Italy. SDT affirms that the more people tend to be conservative, to show prejudices towards minority group’s members and to show discriminative and racist behaviours, the more they are Social Dominant Oriented. This means that they feel authorized to have a more privileged position than external groups, on which they base their success and their identity. A population with a high NIM index value registers similar characteristics.

Nevertheless, the self identification in a group and the perception the Italians have about immigrants, are not the same for everyone. As the Sociologist Valeria Bello affirms in: “Inclusiveness as construction of open identity: how social relationships affect attitudes towards immigrants in European societies”¹¹⁴, three are the sides of fundamental process in people’s life in the society, or rather the role they have within it: the personal identity, the social identity and the collective identity.

According to Herbert Blumer¹¹⁵, also, an individual is situated in a "frame of reference" which is shared with other people who interact in the society accordingly to specific behavioural norms. However, within this framework, each person interprets the situation and acts on the basis of her/his own interpretation. The sociologist, in his works, also highlights how the collective identity, built by group’s leaders, exerts a considerable weight on the formation of the attitudes that individuals assume towards the others. In particular, this tendency depends on the perception of the position that the in-group has by itself, in relation to the other.

Italian data about immigration’s perception is different depending on the level of education, the job position held and the social class to which people belong.

¹¹⁴ V. Bello, “*Inclusiveness as Construction of Open Identity: How Social Relationships affect Attitudes Towards Immigrants in European Societies*”, Social Indicators Research, 2015

¹¹⁵ H. Blumer, “*L’interazionismo simbolico*”, il Mulino, Bologna, 1983

The different perception about immigration depends also from other individual factors treated in the studies of the sociologist Theodor Ludwig Wiesengrund Adorno ¹¹⁶ and in Allport's studies ¹¹⁷. According to the first, the conservatives, the religious people and the elderly, have the tendency to show a greater prejudice against immigrants, while on the contrary, the progressives, the less religious or atheist people and younger people, tend to have be open and liberals than the others. Alloport's studies, on the other hand, which consider individuals' socialization, affirm that the people who have a higher satisfaction by their lifestyle, are involved in more social activities and have more opportunities to do social life, tend to be more favourable to immigration. The latter, in addition, sustains that, people whose roles are involved in social networks, and more cosmopolitan people, tend to have more contacts with the immigrants living in their Country and, consequently, to be more open to them. Eurobarometer's data confirm this factors, showing that Italians, and Europeans in general, who have immigrants as friends or family members, register a less distorted perception of immigration, both regarding the percentage on the total population, and the impact brought in the society. They also tend to see the phenomenon of immigration in a more positive way, than people who do not have any bonds with them and to be, also, more favourable to immigration.

3.2. Different prejudices developed by the Italians against immigrants

Immigration's routes and immigrants' nationalities changed over time. Consequently, the Italians had to face a change in the society of their Country and to deal different integration's episodes including different groups of people. The sociologist Valeria Bello, in her studies, compared the Italian's approach to the Spanish one. As already seen in the first chapter, where the Italian perception of immigration was compared to Sweden, United Kingdom and Spain, Italy is one of the European Countries where the perception of immigration records a negative trend. In this comparison, both Sweden and UK, which are more open to immigration and have a population that

¹¹⁶ T. L. W. Adorno, *"The Authoritarian Personality"*, 1950

¹¹⁷ G. W. Allport, *"The nature of prejudice"*, Oxford, 1954

is composed by a melting-pot of cultures, and Spain, registered better performances than Italy. The results of the latter comparison are more unexpected, inasmuch Spain and Italy are similar Countries, which have a similar geographical and geo-strategic position in the Mediterranean, and therefore an analogous influence of the international environment. In addition, they have a historical and political past of fascist authoritarianism, share many common socio-cultural aspects, have a similar welfare state and both also changed in time, turning from being Countries with strong emigrant flows, to immigration Countries, since the years of the economic boom, until most recent times. Despite in the past incoming people had different nationalities, registering a prevalence of Latin Americans in Spain and Albanians in Italy, in the last years the out-groups are similar which record a large prevalence of Romanians and immigrants coming from Africa and Middle East ¹¹⁸. Different stereotypes are given by the locals to each out-group composed by different nationalities. The most common refer to the Muslims, mainly coming to Italy through the new immigrant routes, who are seen as criminals and terrorists, as a consequence of the 9/11 terrorist attack to the Twin Towers and successive attacks around Europe, and the Romanians, towards whom the stereotypes, which mainly comes from disinformation, mistakenly link them to the Roma group ¹¹⁹. To compare Italy and Spain and the prejudices the locals have regarding immigrants, Bello analyzed pre and post crisis situations using data from the European Social Survey. What came out from her studies is the fact that, before the crisis, the two countries registered a similar propensity to the prejudices against immigrants while, after the crisis and over time, Spain became more tolerant and local citizens changed their attitudes, showing more inclusive behaviour towards immigration. On the contrary Italy kept a negative trend, proving to be a country biased by prejudice. While Spanish people consider immigrants mainly as a threat for the economy of the country, the Italians have a larger perception that their presence damage the local culture. Eurobarometer's data registered, indeed, a low percentage of Italian people believing that immigration brings new idea and boosts

¹¹⁸ N. Ribas-Mateos, "How can we understand immigration in Southern Europe?", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, (op. cit.)

¹¹⁹ V. Bello, "La crisi dell'identità sociale tra pregiudizi, xenofobie e razzismi. L'inclusione dell'altro in tempo di crisi in Italia e Spagna", (op. cit.)

innovation in the Country. Hence, it seems that, in an intergroup situation, where the in-group is represented by the Italians and the out-group by the immigrants living in Italy, the intergroup distance is wide. The Italians, in fact, have Nationalistic tendencies which generate a difficult welcoming and integration of immigrants. It seems they are perceived by the locals, as a threat to their person, nationality and culture. They also show low levels of solidarity and tolerance towards the “different” and discriminative behaviours, based on ethno-cultural issues. By linking those behaviours with Eurobarometer’s data and the high value showed by the NIM index, it can be assumed that the Italian society has the tendency to have a more exclusive type of identity construction than an inclusive one ¹²⁰.

According to social psychology, people’s identity is built through their classification into different groups, to facilitate the self and other’s identification. Therefore, the immigrants enter the host society not as simple individuals, but as members of groups about whom beliefs and attitudes, from out-group’s members, already exist. Social-psychological literature shows how quickly people categorize, homogenize, and evaluate others, even in presence of little conscious awareness. The result is a rooted pervasiveness and durability of stereotyping, which generate difficult integration and several challenges immigrants have to face in their definition in the host society. These prejudicial attitudes, against the foreigners, arise and grows disproportionately, when people believe their access to valued resources, rights, and privileges is threatened, or that their way of life will somehow be undermined by too many newcomers ¹²¹.

This great intergroup bias is generated both by the Italians’ identity construction and by the disinformation the locals have about incoming people.

The disinformation can be generated both by little interest about this phenomenon and immigrants and by the distorted picture the mass media offer to the locals. As seen previously, immigrants’ figure showed by mass media, tends to be focused on negative aspects and to use them as

¹²⁰ V. Bello, “*La crisi dell’identità sociale tra pregiudizi, xenofobie e razzismi. L’inclusione dell’altro in tempo di crisi in Italia e Spagna*”, (op. cit.)

¹²¹ E. R. Cabaniss, A. E. Cameron, “*Toward a Social Psychological Understanding of Migration and Assimilation*”, (op. cit.)

scapegoats of the Country's problems. This topic, indeed, represents a useful tool to get easy consensus and to generate strong emotions in the audience. The fact that the mass media increment intergroup bias and increase integration's problems between the Italians and the immigrants, is also showed in the paper: "La crisi dell'identità sociale tra pregiudizi, xenofobie e razzismi. L'inclusione dell'altro in tempo di crisi in Italia e Spagna"¹²². The Italian sociologist, indeed, in comparing the attitudes that the two local populations have towards immigrants and their perceptions biased by the prejudices, showed how the television and the mass media, impact their attitudes. As already mentioned above, while the Italians perform discriminatory trends, both before and after the 2008 crisis, the Spanish population shows more inclusive attitudes towards immigrants, after it. In this analysis it stood out that among the variables involved in immigrants' perception formation, there are: trust in the others, solidarity, positioning on the left-right political orientation scale, population's age, personal happiness, education and time spent in front of the TV.

Results showed that people's attitudes towards immigrants is negatively correlated with the hours they spend watching TV. The latter, which in Bello's paper was mainly applied to the Spanish situation that registered an increase of positive integration attitudes after the crisis. This result probably depends on the fact that, during the crisis, political and media discourses have mainly focused on the economic issues and, consequently, the "immigration's issue" has somehow stopped to be at the centre of public attention.

Therefore, it seems to be confirmed the fact that the way immigrants are presented increases intergroup distance, prejudices and the feeling of threat and fear that the in-group, or rather the Italians, experiment towards the out-group.

¹²² V. Bello, "La crisi dell'identità sociale tra pregiudizi, xenofobie e razzismi. L'inclusione dell'altro in tempo di crisi in Italia e Spagna", (op. cit.)

3.3 Reducing intergroup bias and encouraging immigrants' integration in the Italian society

The negative picture and perception towards immigrants, who are found in the Italian situation, therefore, derive from a general scarce knowledge and information from the locals and the image offered by the mass media about minorities' members.

Although many Italians claim that they have no problems with immigrants and are not racist, Eurobarometer's data showed that a large percentage feels uncomfortable with immigrants and shows discriminatory attitudes. In fact, even when people work to keep prejudices and negative beliefs under control, this does not mean that they easily disappear. However, people who have a higher level of education and are better informed about immigrants and minorities' members, register a higher tendency to include them, more than others. The grater is, indeed, the disinformation, the greater is the intergroup bias and the harder is the integration between the Italians and the immigrants.

To reduce intergroup discrimination and to help minority groups' integration in the society of the incoming Country, it is then important to reduce prejudices towards out-group's members. In the paper "The beneficial role of multiple categorization and intergroup contact in reducing linguistic out-group derogation"¹²³, it is demonstrated that the prejudices and the discrimination the local population has against migrants, are closely linked to the use of language. This means that, depending on the use of some specific terms, the prejudices can be negatively reinforced or weakened up to be, sometimes, eliminated. Through a series of experiments, the authors demonstrated some linguistic strategies which help prejudices' reduction against the foreigners. When a person is labelled with the term "immigrant", for example, the image he receives is mostly negative but, the more it is enriched by other details, the more the negative perception decreases. The same mechanism works for prejudices. One of the experiments showed that, for example, if a Romanian works as a window cleaner, the perception of the local population towards him, tends to

¹²³ F. Prati, M. Menegatti, M. Rubini, "The beneficial role of multiple categorization and intergroup contact in reducing linguistic out-group derogation", *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 2015

be negative. If, instead, the Romanian, who is taken into consideration, is an entrepreneur, the unexpected perception generates a sense of surprise and reduces discriminative attitudes, which brings a more positive immigrant's image to the locals.

Social Psychology shows that people tend to define out-group's members in a more unfavourable way than in-group's ones, even without realizing it. An example is the narration of negative events, or crimes, by the mass media; when the authors have an Italian nationality, these events are described with different terms and are generally seen as occasional and isolated. On the contrary, when the authors are immigrants, the mass media tend to highlight their nationality and to evoke broader generalizations, increasing prejudices. Another part of the experiment showed that the use of specific details in describing a person who belong to an out-group can help to reduce discrimination. The participants were asked to describe the portrait of an immigrant. The description were, step by step, enriched with details. By offering more specific details, not only focused on people's nationality, the participants shaped a mental representation of a single individual, rather than a generic member of the immigrants' group and, consequently, the latter was described in a less unfavourable way.

In a Country that registers high nationalist tendencies and which feels culturally undermined by incoming people, it is easy to increment prejudices and a negative portrait of immigrants makes the integration process even harder. A way to reduce intergroup distance and to help the Italians and the immigrants to integrate each others, could be to modify the language used to describe the foreigners and the minorities. Unfortunately, this is not an easy process, inasmuch the mass media increase their audience by generating feelings of fear and insecurity and the topic of immigration covers a large share of the transmitted news.

Stereotypes and prejudices mainly make people think of out-group's members as different from them. At the basis there is the concern that intergroup contacts may be hard and unpleasant, and people's anxiety may lead them to avoid as much as possible to interact with people from external

groups¹²⁴. People's identity is built on the division of the society into different groups, composed by people who share similar characteristics with in-group's members and diversities with the others. The Social Psychology affirms that the more people feel represented by their group, the more they tend to highlight their uniqueness and the differences from the out-groups, which are often exaggerated. This happens because people have prejudices and do not know the other groups in depth, mainly because they tend to avoid contacts with them. Consequently, prejudices could be reduced by creating closer intergroup connections. Some studies, which analyzed children from different ethnic group playing together in school and growing in an intercultural environment¹²⁵, or students who took part to mobility programmes, as the Erasmus programme¹²⁶, have shown that, by increasing intergroup contact, discriminative attitudes are reduced while increase positive and inclusive behaviours toward them. The beneficial effect of the contact between groups is also confirmed in Pettigrew and Tropp's work¹²⁷, where it stands out that attitudes toward groups that were in contact became more positive over time. This happened consequently to the contact and the empathy generated towards the others, which mainly came from majority groups to minority groups, and it also brought a general reduction of stereotypes and prejudices. However, a sporadic contact is not sufficient. When, in fact, people meet someone from another category, they are likely to rely almost exclusively on their stereotypes, at first. Hence, to be effective, an in-depth contact is required, so as to succeed in providing information which demonstrate the incorrectness of prejudices. Only when people get to know the others well, they stop caring about individual's group membership and start to see them as single persons. Accordingly, a successful intergroup contact, tends to reduce the perception of out-group homogeneity, and to notice the presence of variability

¹²⁴ R. K. Mallet, D. T. Gilbert, T. D. Wilson, "Expect the Unexpected: Failure to anticipate similarities leads to an intergroup forecasting error", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2008

¹²⁵ S. R. Bigler, S. L. Liben, "A cognitive-developmental approach to racial stereotyping and reconstructive memory in Euro-American children", 1993

F. E. Aboud, "The formation of In-Group Favouritism and Out-Group prejudice in young children: Are they distinct attitudes?", 2003

¹²⁶ K. Oborune, "The Case Study of the Erasmus Programme in Latvia: Stereotypes and European Identity", Budapest, 2010

¹²⁷ T. F. Pettigrew, L. R. Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2006

inside the latter's members. Contact also helps people in feeling more positively about out-group's members and it generates positive attitudes towards them.

To change the perception Italians have towards incoming immigrants is surely difficult, because of the many prejudices and the negative attitudes of the local population. Nevertheless, the creation of new contact's opportunities between the local population and the immigrants could be a first step to foster integration. First of all, more free courses with the aim to help immigrants to learn the Italian language, should be encouraged, inasmuch the communication problem turns out to be very important. The first contacts could be developed in school-age, when the prejudices are less rooted, teaching that multiculturalism is a benefit, rather than, as sometimes happens, a burden. Intergroup contacts could also be encouraged through common activities in the neighbourhood. It is important to understand the lifestyle of out-group's members, both to better understand other cultures, and to realize that the intergroup differences are not always that great. The workplace could also be a point of contact, where distances could be reduced. Some academics, as the psychologist Antonietta Albanese ¹²⁸, demonstrated that the contact between immigrant and Italian workers, who share the same job place, has the tendency to remain very superficial and almost inexistent.

The absence of interaction between groups of different ethnicity is accompanied by a mono-ethnic intra-group interaction, when two or more workers, who share the same nationality, work together. In a society that is already closed towards the incoming foreigners, this immigrants' behaviour increase integration's difficulty and intergroup bias.

Therefore, the creation of a contact between the locals and the non-locals, is important to break down the prejudices the Italians have and to increase inclusive behaviours towards others, and vice versa. In fact, even minority groups seem to implement exclusionary and protective behaviour of their own group, by using their condition as a distinctive element from the other groups.

¹²⁸ A. Albanese, "*Immigrati e Identità Sociale*", Milano, 2006

This happens because, as members of a minority, they often have the tendency to perceive themselves as inferior and prefer to socialize among the members of the same group, from whom they feel most accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this study was to analyze the phenomenon of migration, focusing on the Italian situation where, nowadays, immigration seems to represent a central topic in the society, in politics and in the mass media. From Eurobarometer's data, Italy showed the most distorted perception in Europe concerning the percentage of immigrants on the total population. In addition, it turned out to be a Country with strong Nationalist, anti-immigration and anti-minorities tendencies, by registering the highest value on the NIM Index in Europe. The Italian population has proved to be not very open to different cultures, at times almost racist, and to see immigrants more like a burden, than as a resource for the Country. The mass media certainly represent a tool which increases the intergroup distance between the Italians and the immigrants. In fact, they attract the audience by generating feelings of insecurity and fear and they use immigrants as scapegoats to explain the problems of the Country, such as the economic ones, and to narrate black news, when they are the authors.

The distorted perception of immigration and the discriminatory attitudes towards foreigners, mainly coming from the East Europe and from Africa, originate from ignorance, which is a primary cause of prejudices and stereotypes.

The Social Psychology, starting from Henri Tajfel's studies on intergroup relations and on the Minimal Group Paradigm, which are followed by his colleagues' studies on the Social Identity Theory, the Self-Categorization Theory and the Social Dominance Theory, has tried to explain how prejudices and discriminatory attitudes between groups are generated. Subsequently, also the Experimental Economics has brought a contribution in the analysis of these issues.

According to the Social Psychology, man's nature leads him to divide the society into groups, to better orient himself, and to identify himself in those more similar to him. The greater the differences between the groups, the more the individual identifies herself/himself with his own group and intergroup bias are higher. When the two groups represent a majority and a minority in the society, discriminative attitudes from the majority to the minority group tend to be greater, but

there could also be discriminative attitudes towards the majority group, as a defence mechanism of the in-group, by the member of the minority.

The perception of the Italians about immigration is then explained by the Social-Psychological theories. The Italian population registers a high Nationalist identity which does not favour the integration of the immigrants, who are considered a threat to their cultural identity. The Social Dominance Theory supports the fact that the Italians have superior attitudes which tend to discriminate out-group's members who are in unfavourable conditions, as in the case of immigrants. In addition, the prejudices towards the latter, increased by the mass media the lack of knowledge and the lack of relationships between the two groups, do not favour integration between the different cultures, but, on the contrary, they tend to increase the Italians' perception of their superiority.

This thesis, after analyzing the distorted perception of immigration in Italy and the theories of Social Psychology, which were used to explain it, has the aim to propose some suggestions to reduce the prejudices and the discriminative attitudes that the Italians have towards immigrants and to favour the cultural integration in the society.

A first suggestion is to pay attention to the language used to describe the foreigners and addressed to them. It has been demonstrated in fact that, in describing a person, the more the definition of "immigrant" is enriched by adjectives and specifications, the more the person's identification with an out-group is reduced and it is seen as a single individual. This process of alienation from the group reduces the distance and helps to point out the similarities between individuals belonging to different groups.

Another suggestion is to increment contact opportunities between the local and the immigrant population. Given the fact that, at the basis of the prejudices and of the little integration, there is a lack of knowledge about the other and his culture, a constant contact with the aim to develop a deeper knowledge could help to improve integration. Data showed that the people who have immigrants as friends and family members, usually record a less distorted perception of

immigration and tend to be more favourable to integration and to see immigration as an added value.

Accordingly, just developing an intergroup contact and people's knowledge about different cultures, could reduce prejudices and make people understand that they are unfounded. In addition, to establish a direct contact with each others, if both part show a real interest and effort in knowing out-group's members, could help people to notice intercultural similarities, which helps the integration process and to understand that multiculturalism is a richness and not a burden for the society.

APPENDIX

Experimental Economics: A branch of economics which studies human behaviour in a controlled laboratory setting or in a specific field, rather than mathematical models, which was pioneered by the 2000's Nobel Prize in Economics: Vernon Smith. Experimental Economics uses scientific experiments to test people's choices in specific circumstances and to understand how they behave, with the purpose to study alternative market mechanisms and test economic theories. It mainly operates through rewards and penalties which, depending on the instructions, experiment's participants obtain or have to assign to the others. This plays a crucial role, inasmuch it acts as a natural incentive for participants to make rational decisions in their self-interest. Usually, experiment's creators divide the participants in two groups, a control group and an experimental group. Then, they modify rules and incentives, in the experiment, in order to record participant behavioural changes ¹²⁹.

Control Group: The control group, also called "comparison group", is used in an experiment as a basis to control if the experiment actually works and as a mean of comparison to understand experiment's results. Experiment's participants are usually split into two groups: the experimental group and the control group. The control group is supposed to represent a situation without any interventions from experiment's creators, to see how people behave normally. Taking in consideration an economical experiment, the control group is the group that, in following the experiment's instructions, does not involve any rewards or penalties.

Experimental Group: An experimental group, also called "**treatment group**" is the group to which experiment's creators apply interventions to study participants' behavioural changes. The instructions that its members receive are the same than control group's members. The only difference between them, usually, is the introduction of a rewards which is not mentioned to the control group. At the end of the experiment the two groups are confronted to understand how

¹²⁹ Source: Investopedia (<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/experimental-economics.asp>)

people behave in different situations and how the allocation of a sum of money changes their behaviour and draw up related conclusions.

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