

Teenagers and the phenomenon of immigration.

A new comparative approach to understand the effects of the context and of the national ideology on the social representation of the immigrant

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Abstract: This article illustrates the results of a study on the social representation of the immigrant, worked out by two groups of teenagers introduced in different immigration contexts. Unlike normal surveys usually carried out in which the characteristics of context are abstracted, the present one aims to test the hypothesis of the strong link that exists between the evaluation of the immigrant and the social role assigned to him by the socio-political apparatus of the host society. The results show that the different temporal exposure to diversity, as well as the different ideological systems are variables that are strongly reflected in the two images of the immigrant that emerge. A second result demonstrates indirectly that even such a young adolescent population as the one surveyed presents a thorough and complete socialisation of the respective national beliefs.

Keywords: immigration, interethnic, prejudice, teenagers, identity.

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1. Introduction

This article aims at illustrating the social representation of the immigrant as perceived by two groups of young people set in two different immigration contexts: the former, a country, Italy, with a short immigration history, the latter, France, characterised by a much longer experience of it.

The decision to conduct a study on the adolescent segment of the population by means of a quantitative analysis of data collected qualitatively stems from the intent of

- a) drawing attention to the ways and means younger generations apply to deal with such an important phenomenon as immigration;
- b) presenting the different contextual characteristics that influence the formation of the social representation;
- c) going beyond the opinion surveys usually conducted on this subject that limit their survey of the adult population and focus their analysis on the dichotomy of “positive versus negative effects” for the host society;
- d) giving an overview with a forecasting and educational value for the segment of the population that is currently witnessing a series of important social changes which will soon concern them as adults.

The hypotheses underlying the present study have a rather qualitative and exploratory character. It is a study concerning two precise populations, which does not aim at any form of representativeness with the respective reference universes. The goal it tries to reach is detecting how much the public discussion concerning immigration and the specific features of the migratory phenomenon which characterize the Italian and the French situation reflect in the representation of an immigrant as it is formulated by two populations at a stage of life crucial for consolidating intergroup relations. The results concern solely the groups being studied, a population which qualified with the status of majority group.

Next to the main question of research, the interest of the survey is checking whether other more micro-social variables such as the ones defining the social position of the actor, intervene in the representational process of the object being studied.

Therefore there are two main records taken into consideration which

contribute to define the independent variables: a) the *situation of immigration*, a complex variable consisting in the level of historical experience with the migratory phenomenon and the political culture of the country which intervenes in modeling the status of minority groups b) the *social position* of the actor, such as the social, economical and cultural status, a variable we generally attribute a highly predictive capability when one wishes to study individual cognitive processes.

Finally, still within the independent variables, one should not underestimate the situated character of the selected population. Even if this is a trans-contextual³ comparison, it rests on different urban contexts, each of them being characterized by a specific immigration history, which could in turn act in the construction of the images of alterity.

The interest of this study is therefore understanding the scope of the effects of these possible sources of variation about the social representation of the immigrant who stands out of the studied population. In other words, the immigrant representation processing undergoes more the capability of influence of the social position of the single person, of the reference urban context or of the wider national context, where the dynamics of majority – minority group take shape. Through statistical analysis it will be possible to submit to verification the contribution of each of these variables in the process of formation of the representation being examined.

In order to make these research questions more legible, we shall open a theoretical methodological parenthesis necessary to define in more precise terms the subject and the problem being investigated.

2. The subject of the study.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the study is first of all focused on the *majority group*. According to the literature about inter ethnic relations, the majority group consists of people with no experience of immigration, who find themselves in a « *privileged* »⁴ situation under the numerical, political and economical standpoint in comparison with

³ Fideli R. (1998), *La comparazione*, ed. Franco Angeli, Milan, chap. 2.

⁴ This notion dates back to the illuminating article by H. Blumer *Race Prejudice as a Sense of Group Position*, in which he talks about *status prerogatives* to qualify the reactions of the majority group against minority groups : Blumer H., (1958), *Race prejudice as a sense of group position*, in "Pacific Sociological Review," vol. 1, n° 1.

minority groups. By recalling C. Guillaumin's position⁵, in view of such status advantages the *majority group* intervenes in a crucial way in the process of the social definition of the immigrant populations or of such origins. You can also meet the expression : *national people* as opposed to *non-national people*. The national population is considered according to Weber's terminology *i.e. a group of people united « [...] by the feeling of owning something in common »*⁶ which Weber qualifies as "national feeling"⁷. It takes into consideration the belief of belonging to the same linguistic, religious and cultural community which gives life to a precise political organization perceived as exclusive and opposed to the one of other external groups⁸.

The notion of *majority group* has been operationalized by concentrating the analysis of the available data only on young people coming from both national contexts being examined after at least 2 generations⁹. We can use an expression with an evident ideological inspiration but with a high descriptive clarity to say that the study has been made on two native populations, or populations *de souche*¹⁰.

For what the subject of the analysis is concerned, in order to obtain its definition, the social representation of the immigrant needs to be broken down in two dimensions, namely *social representation* and the *immigrant*.

In a quantitative study such as this one, conducted by applying a semi-structured survey technique¹¹, the concept of social representation used refers to the psycho-social literature on the subject (from now on SR). SRs

⁵ Guillaumin C., (1972), *L'idéologie raciste*, éd. Mouton & Co, Paris, pp. 119-21.

⁶ Weber M. (1971), *Économie et Société*, éd. Plon, Paris, tome 2, p. 143 [orig. 1921].

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ It has been possible to proceed in this direction by means of two items contained in the questionnaire relevant to the place of both of the interviewed person, his parents and grandparents. All those who have been born abroad or with at least a relative born abroad have therefore been excluded from the procedure of analysis.

¹⁰ The concept of *souche (native)* is actually recurrent in the political rhetoric of the French party *Front National*; for further information about xenophobia at a European level please see: Ivaldi G., (2004), *Droites populistes et extrêmes en Europe occidentale*, ed. La Documentation Française, Paris, cap. 1.

¹¹ The questionnaire consists in fact of items structured as attitude scales, the results of which in this article will only partially be evoked, and by more qualitative items such as the test of verbal association which made it possible to study the social representation subject of our considerations.

can be defined as « *sources of common sense knowledge* »¹². They intervene as « *cultural programs* »¹³ with the role of passing on the knowledge produced by the “reified world” of science and ideologies to the “consensual world” which characterizes everyday life¹⁴. SRs are theories understandable by the man in the street which make it easier to understand the social world. These semantic constructs represent « *a form of knowledge, socially elaborated and shared, with a practical goal contributing to the construction of a reality common to a social whole* »¹⁵. For this reason they have a high abstraction level and an important filiation from ideologies¹⁶. They represent an important source of information from which the single man can draw to form their own attitudes even if, we should highlight it, SRs cannot be qualified as a synonym of attitudinal stances. As a matter of fact according to P. Mannoni representations are located at a higher social-cognitive level in comparison with attitudes and opinions¹⁷.

The purpose of the study is therefore identifying the semantic-cognitive reference structures processed by both groups of teenagers around the concept of immigrant, by verifying the connections with the national dimension they are part of and the relevant social position they have.

Finally we shall define the subject of the SRs being studied, the *immigrant*, particularly in view of the comparative aspect of the survey. It is a complex concept, which can evoke different situations, but has been chosen in view of a feature common to both national contexts the study has been conducted in.

In Italy, a country of recent immigration and with a juridical frame

¹² Jodelet D. (1989), *Les représentations sociales*, éd. Presse Universitaire de France, Paris, p. 35 [all translations are made by the author].

¹³ Expression formulée par Seca J-M (2001), *Les représentations sociales*, éd Armand Colin, Paris, p. 5.

¹⁴ In the theory of SR the distinction between reified world and consensual world has been introduced by: Moscovici S., Georges V., (1994). *Le concept de Thémata*, in Guimelli C., (edited by), *Structures et transformations des représentations sociales*, éd. Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel, p. 71

¹⁵ Jodelet D., (1989), *Les représentations sociales*, ed. Presse Universitaire de France, Paris, p. 48 (in italics in the original texte).

¹⁶ About this point please see the conference proceedings: Aebischer V., Deconchy J-P., Lipiansky E. M., (sous la direction de), (1991), *Ideologie set représentations sociales*, ed. Delval, Cousset (Fribourg).

¹⁷ Mannoni P., (2006), *Les représentations sociales*, ed. Presse Universitaire de France, coll. Que sais-je ?, Paris, pp. 26-9.

about citizenship that does not make naturalization easy¹⁸, the concept of *immigrant* is still widely a synonym for foreigner. On the contrary, France is characterized by a long experience of immigration and by a series of more inclusive standards about naturalization¹⁹. In this case the term “immigrant” not only is not a synonym of foreigner, but it also often refers to people who are French citizens but in view of their origins or of the origin of their family are classified by the public opinion as immigrants or, more precisely, of *immigration origin*.

In view of this non-perfect semantic homogeneity, the choice of using the term *immigrant* and proceeding by identifying its representation stems from the same study issues. Today the Italian and French public debates about the statutes of the *minority groups* concern expressly the subject of immigration and the social issues connected with the presence of immigrant populations. The term *immigrant* has appeared to be the one that better synthesizes a more general migratory question in these two national contexts and most frequently circulates in public debates. As to the French case the constitution of the *Ministère de l'Immigration et de l'Identité Nationale* required by the President of the French Republic N. Sarkozy is a relevant symptom. The application of another concept, such as for example, foreigner, would only give a partial representation of the migratory phenomenon, by orienting the analysis towards a (juridical) category, certainly better defined, but at the cost of taking the study far from its main focus. The study concentrates on the *immigrant* as main actor of a phenomenon, the migratory phenomenon, which, despite the respective national differences, offers the possibility of a single important and present debate valid for both survey contexts.

3. National teenagers and immigration: a seemingly overlooked matter of study.

¹⁸ About this please see the study edited by: Zincone G., (2006), *Familismo legale. Come (non) diventare italiani*, éd. Laterza, Roma-Bari

¹⁹ A foreigner who should wish to become an Italian citizen shall prove to have a legal and uninterrupted residence for 10 years and the children of foreigners born in the Italian territory can have the Italian citizenship only when they are eighteen years old (Law 5 Feb. 1992, no.91). In France naturalization can be requested after 5 years of legal and uninterrupted residence and the children of foreigners are entitled to ask for it on their thirteenth birthday if they can prove an uninterrupted residence in the French territory for at least 5 years (Law 26 November 2003, no. 2003-1119).

From a theoretical and methodological standpoint, it is important to point out the explorative and innovative character of the study. First of all we should point out that most surveys about the perceptive processes of the *minority groups* by the members of the welcoming society focuses on adult populations, usually ranging from 18 to 64 years old. It is the case, for example, of the survey conducted by the *European Social Survey* institute in 2002. It contains a module about the migratory phenomenon²⁰. Similar considerations can be made for the survey conducted by *Eurobarometro* in 2003 and analyzed by P. Scheepers and M. Coenders by varied sophisticated techniques²¹. Also in the recent edition of the *European Values Study*, which contains a short section about the migratory phenomenon, the unit of analysis consists mostly of an adult population²². Beside that, these surveys are conceived by means of widely structured detection techniques (attitude scales) where the subject of the survey is introduced directly as a social issue.

On the contrary this study has opted for a more qualitative and explorative logics by introducing its objet in an axiologically neuter manner. In fact the interviewed people have had to associate with the term immigrant the first words that came to their mind (verbal association test).

Secondly, the choice of studying how a population, at the time far from the obligations and responsibilities typical of the adult roles, represent for themselves a phenomenon loaded with social implications – usually evoked in complex political debates – results from the specificity of this part of population in the study intergroup relations. In fact it is during the teen age²³ that both the social individual identity and the reference value system start to be consolidated, two elements which permit to give a meaning to

²⁰ Please see the detailed website of the *European Social Survey*: <http://ess.nsd.uib.no/ess/round1/>.

²¹ Coenders M., Lubbers M., Scheepers P., (2003), *Majority populations' attitudes towards migrants and minorities*, Report for the European monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia – Ref. no. 2003/04/01, Wien.

²² In this case, too please see the detailed website of the *European Values Study*: <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/surveys/survey-2008.html>. The matrix of this survey has already been subject to Italian and French analyses: Gubert R., Pollini G., (edited by), (2008), *Il senso civico degli italiani. La realtà oltre il pregiudizio*, ed. Franco Angeli, Milano; Bréchon P., Tcherna J-F., (edited by), (2009), *La France à travers ses valeurs*, ed. Armand Colin, Paris.

²³ By *adolescence* or teen age we refer to the first of the three stages of youth, preceding *post-adolescence and the stage of young adults*. For further information please see : Galland O. (2009), *Les jeunes*, ed. La Découverte, Paris, p. 61-72.

the relation of US versus THEM²⁴. Moreover, reflecting on alterity in this survey is further stimulated by the fact that the population being examined is going to end the second cycle of their studies, and this entails the development of “status expectations”²⁵ with the consequent need for getting to know the social aspects with a relatively independent point of view about the phenomena characterizing it.

The choice of studying how the teenagers picture the immigrant, seems to be particularly pertaining in order to understand how the national population picture one of the most up-to-date social phenomena in both contexts being examined.

Having said that it is good to stress the fact that there are not many study made to understand how teenagers picture for themselves one of the most typical actors of the present times: the immigrant. For what the French literature on the matter is concerned, the only bibliography available consist in the yearly survey of the *Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme* about the attitudes towards racism²⁶. In this case, too the considerations which apply are those expressed for the above mentioned surveys, namely: an adult population interviewed with survey techniques structured to detect attitudinal standpoints.

For what the Italian situation is concerned, we detect the presence of three study with the subject of the relation between young nationals and immigration. Two are very similar for the chosen method and population. I am referring to the study conducted by R. Cipollini²⁷ in 2002 and by M. S. Agnoli²⁸ in 2004. The third and most recent one dates 2009 and was commissioned by the *Presidenza dei Presidenti delle Assemblee Legislative delle Regioni e delle Province Autonome*²⁹. A comparison within this study

²⁴ About this point see : Brown R., (1995), *Prejudice. Its Social Psychology*, ed. Blackwell Publisher, Oxford.capp. 3 et 5; Aboud F., (1988), *Children and prejudice*, ed. Basil Blackwell, Cambridge-Oxford, cap. 3; Tajfel H., Turner J., (1986), *The social identity theory of intergroup behavior*, in Worchel S., Austin W. G. (edited by), *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Nelson, Chicago, chap. 1.

²⁵ As to the concept of status expectations see: Blau P., Duncan O. D., (1967), *The American occupational structure*, ed. Wiley, New York.

²⁶ The various annual research reports of CNCDH can be found in the following website: <http://www.cncdh.fr/>

²⁷ Cipollini R., (edited by), (2002), *Stranieri. Percezione dello straniero e pregiudizio etnico*, ed. Franco Angeli, Milano.

²⁸ Agnoli M. S., (edited by), (2004), *Lo straniero in immagine*, ed. Franco Angeli, Milano.

²⁹ Presidenza dei Presidenti delle Assemblee Legislative delle Regioni e delle Province Autonome, (2010), *Io e gli altri: i giovani italiani nel vortice dei cambiamenti*, report made

and the previous one is hard to make due to the reference population choice. In fact the unit of analysis consists of “post-adolescents” and “young adults”, while our analyzed population includes just the adolescents or teenagers³⁰. The study made by R. Cipollini and M. S. Agnoli focus rather on the students of II grade secondary schools, thus presenting a pattern more homogeneous with this work. It is thus possible to evoke its main results, but one should point out that the studies are based on greatly structured techniques, essentially focused on the attitudinal aspects and therefore different from this research.

The work directed by R. Cipollini is widely devoted to the analysis of the ethnical prejudice expressed by the students of a technical institute in the Rome area. The goal of this research group is operationalizing the key concepts of foreigner sociology³¹ - such as proximity and distance, ambivalence, menace, innovation and diversity, just to mention the most important points – by verifying the space they occupy in the eyes of the adolescents submitted to the study. The results refer to the fact that the forms of prejudice and the stereotypes for what diversity is concerned depend directly on the reference « *cultural model* »³² which represents a « *more or less defined identification system* »³³ for the actor. The foreigner figure emerging from this is articulated on three main stereotypes: ambivalence, i.e. a foreigner oscillating between two worlds, by generating attraction and revulsion at the same time; deviance i.e. a foreigner who destabilizes the social order; separation, a non-integrated foreigner, marginal as to the welcoming community. This typology, however, rests on a common cognitive substrate consisting of the idea of diversity, defined by the research authors as an « *irreducible diversity which is perhaps of obstacle to the interethnic meeting* »³⁴.

The survey conducted by M. S. Agnoli represents some sort of continuity with the earlier work. The research group, the hypotheses and the detection circle are actually similar. The study issues, developed through a long articulated structured form, requires the immigrant's

by the SWG institute of Trieste and by the Iard RPS Institute of Milan.

³⁰ As to distinguishing among adolescence, post-adolescence and young adults please see note 22.

³¹ The theoretical frame refers in fact to the work of G. Simmel, R. Michels, W. Sombart, N. Elias, R. K. Merton e Z. Bauman.

³² Cipollini R., (2002), *Op. cit.*, p. 91.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 144.

representations to be at the base of « *the expectations and orienting to action of the young* »³⁵. The results relevant to the perceptions of immigration confirm what was identified by Cipollini's analysis two years earlier. The foreigner's image is first of all a heterogeneous patchwork of stereotypes where positive and negative cognitions coexist. A deep analysis of perceptions and stereotypes permits to define a typology of the social images of the foreigner which range from « *tolerant* » perceptions to those which are « *tolerant with reserve* », « *moderately conflictual* » and « *conflictual* »³⁶. Furthermore another typology emerges, detecting the degree of congruence among stereotypes, expressed by the young about the immigrants and the Italians³⁷. It is interesting to notice that the subjects who express negative perceptions to the disadvantage of the immigrant populations are also characterized by status incongruence. Despite being in low statuses from an economical-cultural standpoint, there is a trend to perceive themselves as members of higher statuses.

Once the scant (however interesting) literature available on the subject, it is important to try and recollect the most important points in the present debate about immigration in Italy as well as in France. As the theories about the SRs would suggest, the latter are the result of a specific context and of the relative social dynamics, within which a precise debate includes the subject matter of the representational process.

4. Italy and France: a different “national attitude” towards immigration.

The migratory phenomenon characterizes both contexts of the study, even if deep specific aspects can be identified. Italy is a country with recent immigration, at the time with no integration model, reflecting the national culture and history. On the contrary France is a country with a long immigration experience, whose political management of the phenomenon is inspired to a standard frame deeply rooted in a national political culture existing since over two hundred years. The two following paragraphs will take in consideration the most characteristic features of the migratory situation in Italy and France.

³⁵ Agnoli M. S., (2004), *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 112-7.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 170-6.

4.1 The Italian situation

Among the main immigration countries in the European Union, Italy is one of those where the steps to a *post-migratory*³⁸ situation are taken faster.

For example, if the foreign population was around 700,000 units in 1990, twenty years later the non-Italian population exceeded 4 million people³⁹. The second generation now represents roughly 19.2% of total number of resident immigrants in the country.⁴⁰

Since 2002 this country has been at the centre of an emergency “phase”. In the wake of electoral strategies devised by the “new right” wing, an important part of Italy’s political class treats immigration as one of the principal social ailments afflicting the country⁴¹. It is a criminalization of the migratory phenomenon which is a typical sign of the stage the country of recent immigration is in. Considering the fact that the subject is new and the social matters implied by the installation of immigrated populations, the Italian society is plunged into a situation which, to apply R. E. Park’s expression, can be considered as resulting from a stage of « *conflict* »⁴².

Even if this situation does not leave out any of the migratory groups, those who are subject to the worst stigmatization are Rumanians and Roms (gypsy)⁴³. Facing the census of the Roms in the open camps in Italy and the

³⁸ The definition of the *post-migration* context is to be ascribed to : Martiniello M., Poncelet M., (edited by), (1993), *Migrations et minorités ethniques dans l’espace européen*, L’homme/L’étranger, Bruxelles – Université de Boeck, pp.167-185. It aims at defining a context characterized by a long immigration experience where the present immigration waves follow after the previous ones (i.e. France, United Kingdom, Germany). It is a very complex situation, as some immigrants still have a foreign nationality. On the contrary, some others have been naturalized by a long period of residence or by birth (*ius soli*), and obviously some people do not have any experience of immigration.

³⁹ Caritas/Migrantes, (2009), *Immigrazione. Dossier Statistico 2009*, ed. Idos, Roma, p. 97.

⁴⁰ This figure includes both immigrants born in Italy as well as minors who arrived together with family groupings: Caritas/Migrantes, (2008), *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2008*, ed. Anterem, Roma, p. 157.

⁴¹ Calavita K., (2005), *Law, Race, and Exclusionism in Southern Europe*, éd. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 48-64.

⁴² Park R. E., Burgess E., (1933), *Introduction to the science of sociology*, ed. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 574.

⁴³ A recent survey conducted by the University of Rome 1 has shown that Roms and Rumanians are the groups most frequently mentioned in the information which shows immigration under a bad light (first of all the episodes concerning criminality either directly or indirectly) See Morcellini M., (edited by), (2009), *Ricerca nazionale su immigrazione e*

several expulsions towards other countries of the European Union, the European Parliament themselves have declared that « *the situation of Roms is particularly disquieting in Italy* »⁴⁴. The spiral of criminalization of immigrants, under the impulse of the Lega Nord, has led to the approval of a « *Safety and security package* »⁴⁵ in 2009, a law dedicated to the matters of public security and safety⁴⁶. One of the rules set out in this text appears to be especially troubling: the creation of urban patrols, the “ronde”, provided with benevolence by associations or by retired army members in order to improve surveillance in town (art. 3 c. 41-2). It is a measure which illustrates the political will to promote a stereotype to reduce immigration to a factor of social peace trouble. At a certain stage of the text processing, other very restrictive measures had been provided. On one hand the obligation for doctors to denounce their foreign patients in the event of an irregular stay and on the other hand a stricter control of the action of the associations engaged in local introduction policies, by intensifying police checks. In view of the firm opposition of the whole association world to the project as it was, these two measures have never become law⁴⁷.

Immigration has become a highly politicized issue, combined with a mix of “immigrant” and “criminal”, hard to demolish to the eyes of the “large public”.

Recently Italy’s prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, has publicly declared his disagreement with the increase in cultural pluralism: « *We won’t act like the Left Party, willing to create a multicultural Italy* »⁴⁸. Following this

asilo nei media italiani, University of Rome La Sapienza, Faculty of Communication sciences, Rome, page 31.

⁴⁴ The European Parliament Proposal for a resolution, RC-B7-0222/2010.

⁴⁵ Law no. 94 dtd July 15, 2009 relative to standards concerning public security.

⁴⁶ The purpose of this text is closing the management of immigration entirely within the frame of security and public order. Since its adoption, irregular immigration has become a crime for criminal law, punished with a heavy fine (art. 1 c. 15 a) ; in case of relapse it can lead to as many as 5 years in jail (art. 1 c. 23 m). Detention in the *Centri d’Identificazione* can then be extended to as many as 180 days instead of 60 (art. 14, c. 5).

⁴⁷ For further information about the intentions of the Governments on the occasion of the processing of law no. 94 of July, 15 2009 relative to the measures taken in terms of public order and security, please refer to the action of the associational movement organized by UNICEF Italia, namely to the document spread by Tavolo Associazioni sul Pacchetto Sicurezza, Appeal to the Italian deputies either we change the norms in the security package or Italy will not comply with the rules of the Convention about the rights of infancy dated February 2009, <http://www.lagabbianella.it/mostranews.asp?id=128&cc=10>

⁴⁸ Corriere della Sera, 10th May 2009.

declaration, some ministers of his coalitions rushed to claim that Berlusconi's declaration is an actual revolution which « *has interpreted the feelings of the majority of citizens* »⁴⁹.

However these hostile positions which find a good pretext to have themselves be heard in the strong increase in the immigrated population, are “compensated” by the contrary opinion of a group of actors who have a remarkable ability in letting their messages through.

Among the European countries of immigration, Italy is the country where the help of the actors from the world of the Catholic church is the most important help in terms of integration management. It stands out for its mission and special identity. In fact, in the Peninsula, the public power organizes and set up integration policies through a massif delegation to private actors, among which non-profit religious institutions play an important role. According to M. Ambrosini, we can speak about an « *actual discharge of responsibility to organized solidarity, which strong of this fact, reacts with critical attitudes towards the public power* »⁵⁰. Having said that, the action of the Church is not only limited to the organization of local projects for the immigrants, because it acts also in the public debates by strongly modeling the social definition of this phenomenon. As pointed out by F. Garelli, we could say that the ability of the Italian church to contribute significantly to « *defining the social issues* »⁵¹ also touches the “matter of immigration”.

According to G. Zincone, these solidarity institutions have had the ability to put together an actual « *pro-immigrants front* »⁵² in the debate about immigration, aiming at protecting the dignity and integrity of the people, independently from their origin, and particularly from the validity of their documents. This represents an actual social shockabsorber between the civil society and the political class for the problems risen from the immigration phenomena.

This actor's social and political engagement in human mobility issues had started developing before immigration and has become a matter of interest in Italy. This kind of specialization of the Italian Church in human

⁴⁹ “Identity has to be safeguarded. And Berlusconi has now interpreted the feelings of the majority of the citizens”; from *Il Giornale*, 11th May 2009.

⁵⁰ Ambrosini M., (2005), *Sociologia delle migrazioni*, ed. Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 223.

⁵¹ Garelli f., (2007), *La Chiesa in Italia*, ed. Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 140

⁵² Zincone G., (2005), *Cittadinanza e migrazioni: un'applicazione al caso italiano*, in Bacci M. L., (edited by), *L'incidenza economica dell'immigrazione*, ed. Giappichelli, Torino, p. 395.

mobility grew during the migratory wave of Italians to the United States. As M. Ambrosini says, the Catholic Church went beyond the pure care of souls. It had a role of a social security cushion, able to respond to the needs of a population that was socially, culturally and economically marginalized from the American and Protestant society⁵³. Over the years the attitude behind its interventions hasn't changed: assistance was given for any need, with no distinction of skin color or legal status. The Catholic Church's engagement in human mobility processes is therefore deeply rooted in a context, Italy, which is still today defined as one of the European countries with the highest level of religious integration⁵⁴.

The stance taken by the Church against the recent drift towards populism of the Italian political class is strong. Msgr. M. Crociata, secretary-general of the Italian Episcopal Conference, in reaction to the declarations of the Prime Minister Berlusconi against multiculturalism in Italy, said: « *A multiethnic and multicultural Italy is a "value" and "de facto" already exists* »⁵⁵. Another example which illustrates well the intervention of the Italian church in the public debate about immigration dates back to autumn 2009, when the president of the Council for the Migrants' R. R. Martino declared himself in favour of teaching the Muslim religion at school, when there should be a pertinent request from a sufficient number of students⁵⁶. It has been a simple stance which had no particular consequences, but it is hard to negate its high symbolic value. The way of the religious organisms to deal with the immigration matter is a widespread way of coping with social issues in everyday discourse « *strengthens the public image of the Catholic Church and makes it difficult to think of a different way of acting* »⁵⁷.

It is useful to point out that the role of the Italian church in managing immigration, and especially the "benevolent" print it leaves at a political level, is not subject to positive comments, only. G. Zincone points out that in view of its influence and of the transversal character of its messages in

⁵³ Ambrosini M., (2005), *Gli immigrati e la religione: fattore di integrazione o alterità irriducibile?*, in "Studi Emigrazione", vol. 44, n° 165, p 4.

⁵⁴ Stellingner A., Wintrebte R., (directed by), (2008), *Les jeunes face à leur avenir. Une enquête internationale*, Fondation pour l'Innovation Politique – Kairos Future, Paris, part 1 in particular.

⁵⁵ "A multiethnic and multicultural Italy is "a value" and de facto it already exists. From Corriere della Sera, 10th May 2009.

⁵⁶ Corriere della Sera, 10/03/2010

⁵⁷ Ambrosini M., (2005), *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

the last 30 years, the action of the Church has created « *unbalance between a substantial generosity of rights in favor of the immigrants even irregular [...] on one side and on the other side a hesitation to accept the sense of belonging and emancipation for those who have been resident for a long time and with a regular situation* »⁵⁸. According to the author, the Church is ready to « *grant something about the rights of the long time residents in order to obtain something more for those who remain at the margins* »⁵⁹.

By leaving aside the critics about the role of the Church in the matter of migration in Italy, the interest of the study we have conducted resides in the possibility of checking in which measure this bipolar situation — characterized by the expression of conflicting attitudes that crash against positions oriented towards the opening to the immigrant — crystallizes in the public debate so much that it influences the way of thinking of the young generations.

4.2 The French situation

It is perhaps easier to make sense of the state of affairs in the French case, given that the traumas typical of the initial influxes have been overcome in favor of the establishment of a more definite situation. Having said that, we are now facing an impressive social phenomenon that gained ground at the end of the 21st century and that won't come to a fast conclusion. Therefore I believe the following points can summarize the current political debate.

First of all, from the media's stand point the matter would be quite routine⁶⁰, and would no longer inflame the public opinion as it did in the 70's and '80's except occasionally, as the result of specific events. P. Brechon and J-F Tchernia highlight the fact that the tones openly against the immigrants of the time – the same tones which characterize the present Italian debate – have left room to a more indirect and subtle way of facing the subject⁶¹.

Furthermore, the ruling class continues to obstinately manifest the will to place immigrant populations within the framework of a “republican

⁵⁸ Zincone G., (2005), *Op. cit.*, p. 395.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁰ Marletti C., (1989), *Extracomunitari. Dall'immaginario collettivo al vissuto quotidiano del razzismo*, éd. RAI, Roma. 88-92.

⁶¹ Bréchon P., Tchernia J-F., (2009), *Op. cit.*, pp. 319-20.

model of integration”. It is a series of principles according to which integration, alias assimilation, shall take place in full respect of the “republican values”, which shall be fully interiorized by every individual who wishes to live in the French territory. The goal of this policy, as underlined by J. Streiff-Fénart, is « *restoring confidence in the Nation-State, perceived as a preliminary condition to the development of one’s identity as an individual citizen, rather than as a member of a minority group* »⁶².

This obsession for identity culminated in two emblematic measures. In 2006, the obligation for newly arrived immigrants to sign a contract of adoption and integration⁶³ and as already mentioned, the creation of the Ministry for Immigration, integration, national identity and codevelopment in 2007, which is at the origin of the *Great Debate about National Identity*⁶⁴.

The president of France N. Sarkozy publicly declared his complete confidence in these principles and in these strategy in spring of 2009: «We have to be proud of having re-established an acknowledged discourse on national and republican identity in France», writes the president to his minister É. Besson, « inviting him to continue his activity, openly and with no taboos to reassert the meaning of “being French” »⁶⁵.

It is a complex situation, especially from a media point of view, a situation the specialists of communication define as typical of a normality stage of the information flows. The debate is still there, latent, and comes to the front of the stage only on the occasion of specific events (the riot “of the banlieues”, the “Islam”, etc.). It is a moment in the migratory process qualified by R. E. Park as « *adaptation stage* »⁶⁶: the conflicts that had characterized the first years of immigration are temporarily suspended, the relations among groups are ruled by conservatory logics by means of which the majority society tries to crystallize the subordinate state of the minority groups to maintain the social distance.

⁶² Streiff-Fénart J., (2009), *Le modèle républicain et ses autres : construction et évolution des catégories de l’altérité en France*, in *Migrations Société*, n° 122, mars-avril 2009, pp. 222-223.

⁶³ Law nr 2007-1631 dated Nov. 20 2007 creates a « contract of adoption and integration for families » and imposes an evaluation for family reunion in the country of origin of the level of knowledge of the French language and of the values of the Republic. ».

⁶⁴ For further information see the website: <http://www.debatidentitenationale.fr/>

⁶⁵ From *Le Monde*, 22nd April 2009.

⁶⁶ Park R. E., Burgess E., (1933), *Op. cit.*, p. 664.

Another question remaining open to debate is that of a significant portion of immigrants who remain outside the system, a growing number since 1990 as a result of the perverse effects of the Easter Law. In these years in fact the matter is brought to attention as well as the “movement of the *sans papiers*”. It is estimated that between 200 and 400,000 people⁶⁷ live without any legal permit to stay. Even though these people are in receipt of a basic social protection⁶⁸, they have to resort to undeclared work to provide for their means of support. E. Terray has precisely described the exploitation spiral enclosing non-registered aliens into the workings of the labour market, and the policies aiming to seize this section of the population because of the great economic advantage they represent⁶⁹. About this point the Italian reality is different and we cannot say that the situation of irregularity has been the subject of an important political debate⁷⁰.

Connected with this, we have a symptomatic political convergence which has generated about the matter of immigration already in the nineties. For example as pointed out by G. Noiriél, after taking conscience of how difficult it is to solve the problem of the immigrants’ integration, the left wing parties as well as the right wing parties have preferred to orient their rhetoric towards the problem of discrimination. Therefore we have assisted to a true need to « *change the record, by replacing the word “integration” by “discrimination”* »⁷¹.

⁶⁷ From L’Express, 11th March 2009

⁶⁸ Let’s think about all health care needs, like for example *medical State assistance*, the possibility to access to a *prevention and screening centre*, the *right to education for minors*, the *right to marriage*, to *youth welfare’s and maternity and child benefits*, to an *injury benefit and to social benefits for local communities*. For more information: Groupe d’Information et de Soutien des Immigrés, “Sans-papiers mais pas sans droits”, 4^{ème} édition, 2006, available on line, http://www.gisti.org/IMG/pdf/np_sans-pap-pas-sans-droits_4.pdf

⁶⁹ Terray E., (1999), *Le travail des étrangers en situation irrégulière ou la délocalisation sur place*, in Balibar E., Chemiller-Gendreau M., Costa-Lascoux J., Terray E., *Sans-papiers : l’archaïsme fatal*, ed. La Découverte, pp. 9-34.

⁷⁰ The reasons for such a difference are likely to be two. First of all, in Italy the phenomenon is very new in comparison with France and the population in an irregular position has often had a benefit from frequent measures of regularization (1990, 1996, 1998, 2002, 2009, about 1.5 million foreigners have benefited from them) ; secondly the fabric of the Italian solidarity institutions engaged in protecting the poorest represents a very powerful shock absorber which still seems to be able to take care of the pockets of marginality, in such an autonomous way that they stay hidden from the eyes of public power.

⁷¹ Noiriél G., (2009), “*Color Blindness*”, *et construction des identités dans l’espace public*

Finally, we must take into account the appalling social condition that is the “prize of a game” of those generations emerged from immigration, that reached its culmination with the suburbs riots in 2005; riots which had involved already in the past several suburbs of the largest French cities⁷². As this event found a great echo amongst media and politicians, we cannot exclude that since that moment the image of a non-integrated immigrant has started to spread in French public opinion.

The scientific community has begun to condemn this lack of integration in the 90's. The political class has acknowledged that a part of the population in France is concerned with social inequality because of their racial and ethnic identity⁷³. Despite that, the intellectual moves introduced by the work of P. Simon⁷⁴ still haven't led to any homogenous results.

In fact, an important academic debate on “ethnic statistics” has taken the first step since the beginning of the '90s. On one hand, some scholars refuse all ranking methods taking into consideration racial or ethnic origins; while others propose to collect socio-demographic data on the basis of these variables. The first ones plead their cause affirming that the fact of identifying a group with a category will have as a consequence its enclosure in a socially stigmatized status. In order to fight against discrimination, an engagement for a concrete application of the republican universalism is needed. On the contrary, the second ones maintain that a more detailed knowledge of the victims of discrimination will help understanding the prevalence of social inequalities and elaborating more precise policies in order to thwart them. The controversy is alive at the moment.

français, in : Fassin D., Fassin E., (directed by), *De la question raciale à la question sociale ? Représenter la société française*, ed. La Découverte, Paris, p. 177.

⁷² About this please refer to the analysis of : Morice A., (2005), Les émeutes urbaines d'octobre-novembre 2005 en France, in Pajol, 31 décembre 2005, on-line : <http://pajol.eu.org/article905.html>

⁷³ Streiff-Fenart J., (2009), *Le 'modèle républicain' et ses Autres : construction et évolution des catégories de l'altérité en France*, in “Migrations Société”, vol. 21, n 122, 72 p.

⁷⁴ Simon P., (1997), *La statistique des origines : l'ethnicité et la race dans les recensements aux Etats-Unis, Canada, Grand Bretagne*, in Société Contemporaine, n° 26, 1997, pp. 11-44; Simon P., (1997), *La représentation statistique de l'immigration: peut-on comptabiliser l'ethnicité ?*, in Rallu J-L, Courbage Y., Piche V., (directed by), *Anciennes et nouvelles minorités : démographie, culture et politique*, ed. John Libbey / INED, Paris, pp. 11-30; Martiniello M., Simon P., (2005), *Les enjeux de la catégorisation. Rapport de domination et luttes autour de la représentation dans les sociétés post-migratoires*, in Revue européenne des migrations internationales, n° 2, 2005/2, pp. 7-18.

The debate is still open and J. Streiff-Fenart points out that some measures defined in order to reduce discrimination have a common denominator: the dissimulation of « *racial and ethnic discrimination under the label of territorial inequality* »⁷⁵. The reason behind this strategy of deviation is to be found in the fear of attending to the fainting of the alleged purity of the French Republic that represents a basic pillar of the “republican model of integration”. In the wake of these reflection, A. Maurice comments pithy that “the integration *à la républicaine*” is nothing but a « *pretext to suppress minority particularism, as it is considered dangerous for the unity of the Republic* »⁷⁶.

Considering one and a half centuries of immigration and the presence of a model of inclusion inspired by equality but which finds itself to be confronted with a reality touched by important contradictions, it will be interesting to note which is the image of the immigrant that is shared by the young French guys included in the sample.

5. The study.

Before showing any results we should linger on a short methodological review to be able to understand the features of the sample and of the statistical analysis we have carried out.

The sample consists of 919 cases divided homogeneously between the Italian and the French subsamples, with an average of 17 year old teenagers: Turin (220) and Genoa (229) Nice (470)⁷⁷. The cases have been selected in secondary schools of 2nd degree in the three cities. For the Italian group 35.1% of the cases attend a lyceum, 28.1% a technical institute and 36.9% a professional institute. The French group is distributed as follows: 36.5% of the cases in lyceums, 37.1% in technical institutes and 26.4% in professional institutes. The sampling has followed a choice strategy dictated by the need to comply with variety requirements as to the social, economical and cultural status of the selected population⁷⁸. The

⁷⁵ Streiff-Fenart J., (2009), *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁷⁶ Maurice A., (2005), *Les émeutes urbaines d'octobre-novembre 2005 en France : comprendre avant de juger*, in *Paiol*, 7 p., <http://pajol.eu.org/article905.html>.

⁷⁷ The questionnaires were distributed October to December 2008.

⁷⁸ The coding of professions, needed to define the family's social and economical status, followed the guidelines proposed by : International Labour Organisation, *International Standard Classification of Occupation* 08:

empirical data collect has taken place October to December 2008. The social and political considerations about data analysis shall therefore bear this time limit in mind.

As already specified before, the social representation of the immigrant has been detected by means of a verbal association test⁷⁹. As we have mentioned in the second paragraph, the analysis concerned the data relevant only to the young of Italian and French nationality who, like their parents and grandparents, had never had an immigration experience. The foreign teenagers resulting from immigration or who had such an experience in their family were left out of the data treatment, as the goal was letting the point of view of the young from the majority group stand out.

The social representation of the immigrant has been identified by following the structural school of social representations, aiming at spotting the *central core and the peripheral system* of the representation. The *central core* represents the source of all other cognitions and organizes their position within the global architecture of representation⁸⁰. The *peripheral system* is rather a sort of “concretization diagram”, a belt of rules and knowledge permitting the representation to adhere to reality and to public debate in particular⁸¹.

For what the interpretation of the immigrant representation is concerned, we have chosen to apply the explicative model proposed by P. Moliner⁸², according to which the *central core* as well as the *periphery* of a representation can be analyzed by distinguishing *descriptive cognitions*, which define the subject, and *evaluative cognitions*, i.e. judgments of value about the same subject⁸³. By extending a thesis already sketched by S. Moscovici, it is proposed that « *when the individuals apply cognitive*

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/index.htm>. The coding of the parent' study title, necessarily to define the social and cultural status rested on the typical distribution among: primary school, secondary school 1st level, secondary school 2nd level, university diploma.

⁷⁹ 101 cases were therefore excluded from the analysis for the Italian sample and 154 for the French sample.

⁸⁰ Abric J-C., (edited by), (2003), *Méthodes d'études des représentations sociales*, ed. ERES, Raimondville Saint-Agne, p. 21.

⁸¹ Seca J-M., (2005), *Les représentations sociales*, ed. Armand Colin, Paris, p. 75.

⁸² Moliner P., (1996), *Images et représentations sociales. De la théorie des représentations à l'étude des images sociales*, ed. Presse Universitaire de Grenoble, Grenoble.

⁸³ Ibidem, p. 97

structures depending on a social representation [...] they do it for interpreting the social environment, of course, but also to evaluate it »⁸⁴.

We can summarize that social representations are a repository of knowledge resulting from common sense, where the attitudes take shape, i.e. the evaluations an individual expresses about a given subject.

- *Definitions* : « inseparable characteristics of the representation's object »⁸⁵. These are key elements of the central representation's core. They define the organisation of the global cognitive architecture.
- *Norms* : these cognitions are located in the most external area of the representation's core. They « [...] offer to subjects the possibility to determine this object's criteria of compliance, legitimacy and normality »⁸⁶.
- *Descriptions* : the most internal area of the periphery. It permits the different and possible actualizations of the central core. « They give an operational and diversified nature to the cognitive system constituting the representation »⁸⁷.
- *Expectations* : the most external area of the representation. It constitutes the translation of the most hidden cognitions in the internal structure of the representation into the attitudes and opinions of the actors. These are the most frequent elements in the public debate in regards to the subject being studied.

5.1 From the traumas of first entries to the crystallization of disadvantage: a comparative reading of two central cores.

We propose now a comparative reading of the results displayed in the following tables. They constitute the social representations drew up by two groups of teenagers⁸⁸. The *definitions* section includes the key terms of the core of

⁸⁴ Ibidem, p. 98

⁸⁵ Ibidem, p. 98.

⁸⁶ Ibidem.

⁸⁷ Ibidem, p. 98-9

⁸⁸ In order to facilitate the reading of the table, I'm going to explain the characteristics of the readout. Thanks to the verbal association test, I finally obtained 2917 quotations that came to adolescent's mind through the term "immigrant". Considering that it is impossible to treat all the enunciations directly and given that there were a lot of repetitions, they were gathered together in 17 analytical macro-categories according to the principle of semantic affinity making them mutually exclusive. The category "other" contains cognitions that because of

the SR and establishes the organization of its global cognitive architecture. To Italian teenagers, the immigrant appears very clearly first and foremost as a dangerous social element (“security threat”). In other words, deviance is among the most important constituent elements of their social image. In the French case however, this attribute loses its importance and becomes relegated to the domain of *descriptions*. As we have already said, these are objectifications or concrete examples evoked by the term “immigrant” but they are not crucial enough to represent a necessary element of existence of the SR itself. Instead they are condensed in the “precariousness” which has much higher values than in the Italian results (28.2% of the total vs 9.7%) and represents its fundamental defining pillar (the terms included in this category are for example: difficulties relating to housing, professional career, the bad quality of life in certain neighborhoods, the proximity to deviant activities due to lesser social mobility and job instability, etc.). On the whole, the organization of the two groups’ central cores is quite different. The Italian SR is particularly marked by the traumas that generally characterize the first phases of immigration, in which the foreign people is perceived in the collective imagination as predisposed to deviant behavior, thanks to allegations as well as the amplifying action of the media, regardless of the actual reality.

their low frequency of quotation are devoid of importance in the hypotheses of this survey. Double-entry tables are composed by two main variables. The *frequency* is given by the importance of each category in the aggregate and it is expressed as a percentage. A high percentage means that the category contains a high number of quotations in comparison to the others with a lowest value. The system of the *average ranking* is exactly the opposite to the one of frequencies. It is expressed in absolute values and it is calculated through an analysis of the variance (Anova). The ranking is the order of quotation of the statements on the six indents at disposal of the association test. A *low ranking* means that the statements has been quoted on the first indents of the test, therefore it is part of the representation’s core. On the contrary a *high ranking* means that the word has been quoted on the last indents, it is far from the core and it is located in the periphery of the representation. To sum up, the reading of the *low ranking* is the opposite to the one of the *frequencies*. Each box is the resultant of a crossing between a high or low value of the *frequencies* and the *low rankings*.

The reference score is used to define an *average ranking* for a low or high occurrence and a low or high *frequency of appearance* result from the average of *average ranks* and *frequencies* of all macro-categories contained in the double-entry table. For further information please see Moliner P., Ratheau P., Cohen-Scali V., (2002), *Les représentations sociales. Pratiques des études de terrain*, ed. Presse Universitaire de Rennes, Rennes, p. 142.

Table 1. Social Representation of the immigrant: Italian sample

| | | AVERAGE RANKING | |
|-----------|--------------------|--|--|
| | | Low = < 2.60 | High = > 2.60 |
| | | Central core | |
| | | Definitions | Norms |
| FREQUENCY | High => 6,2% | Security Threat (19.2% - 2.56) Extraneousness (9.9% - 1.40) Cultural Diversity (8.0% - 2.35) | Precariousness (9.2% - 3.77) Social-economic integration (8.3% - 2.69) Compassion (7.8% - 2.89) |
| | | Peripheral System | |
| | Low =< 6,2% | <p>Context of Starting Point (3.5% - 2.33) Illegal entries (3.3% - 1.88)</p> <p>(other 1.7%)</p> | <p>Recognition Categories (4.5% - 2.83) Symbols of Migration (4.1% - 3.31) Negative Qualities (3.7% - 3.26) Positive Qualities (3.3% - 3.50) Intolerance/Rejection (2.6% - 2.94) Social-economic Threat (2.5% - 3.02) Emancipation (2.0% - 2.43) Exploitation (1.6% - 3.7)</p> <p>(other 2.2%)</p> |

Table 2. Social Representation of the immigrant: French sample

| | | AVERAGE RANKING | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| | | Low = < 2.44 | High = > 2.44 |
| | | Central core | |
| | | <i>Definitions</i> | <i>Norms</i> |
| | High => 6.2% | Precariousness (28.8% - 2.35) Extraneousness (12.2% - 1.37) Recognition Categories (9.6% - 1.40) Cultural Diversity (8.2% - 2.12) | Social-economic Integration (7.5% - 3.54) |
| FREQUENCY | | Peripheral system | |
| | | <i>Descriptions</i> | <i>Expectations</i> |
| | Low =< 6.2% | Security Threat (4.3% - 2.34) Context of starting point (3.9% - 2.37) Symbols of migration (3.6% - 2.27) Illegal entries (3.3% - 1.98) Emancipation (1.9% - 2.33) Social-economic Threat (1.9% - 2.40) Negative Qualities (1.6% - 2.41) Intolerance/Rejection (1.5% - 2.31) Compassion (1.4% - 2.33) (other 6.8%) | Positive Qualities (2.1% - 3.33) Exploitation (1.4% - 3.45) (other 1.6%) |

The French SR, on the other hand, whose core is more complex, revolves around the social vulnerability that characterizes the migrant. In my opinion, this is a very significant finding that would suggest that social difficulties in general are a defining element in the immigrant population, even for teenagers of French stock. Despite their young age, which implicitly suggests a certain distance from the notions and cognitions regarding social inequalities and marginalization, they already seem to have been socialized to the point of manifesting a clear and precise idea about the immigrant as an outcast confined to existing in a situation of precariousness.

Finally, the categories of “precariousness” and “social-economic integration” are joined by strong similarities in the most external area of the central core (*norms*).

From the analysis of the French teenagers’ citations, the attributes used towards the immigrant are condensed in the “socio-economic integration” category and therefore help to represent the immigrant as a precarious second-class workers who carries out unskilled tasks, and as such are disdained by the national workforce. The fact that for the French group this category is present in the central core and that this is effectively dominated by “precariousness”, echoes the image of the skilled worker (SW, *ouvrier spécialisé - OS*) that emerged from Abdelmalek Sayad’s lengthy analysis⁸⁹.

In other words, it confirms the almost structural link between the “5 P” tasks outlined in M. Ambrosini’s conceptualization⁹⁰, and a particular demand for work that finds it difficult to break free from the ethnically-based professional categorization.

The “social-economic integration” is the resultant of the same constitutive concepts for the Italian group as well. However these two categories (“precariousness” and “socio-economic integration”) are located in the most external area of the core (*norms*), while the first one is a key element of the social representation worked out of the French sample (*definitions*). And this is not an insignificant difference. For the young people of the peninsula, even if the immigrant is first of all perceived as a factor of destabilization of social peace (criminality), their presence seems

⁸⁹ Sayad A., (1999), *La double absence. Des illusions de l’émigré aux souffrances de l’immigré*, ed. Seuil, Paris, pp. 233-247.

⁹⁰ In Italian: *Pesanti* (heavy), *Pericolosi* (dangerous), *Poco pagati* (poorly payed), *Penalizzanti* (penalising), *Precari* (precarious), on this point, please see: Ambrosini M., (2005), *Sociologia delle Migrazioni*, ed. Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 59.

to be admitted in view of the social and economical advantages it brings. Immigrants usually carry out jobs that are despised by the national labour in view of the social insecurity they imply. In this case the “precariousness” and “socio-economical integration” categories fall actually back within the area of norms, which as already said, includes cognitions focused on the « *criteria of conformity, legitimacy or normality* »⁹¹ that the subject of the representation unchains in the spirit of the interviewed people. In the collective imagination of the young French the picture is different. “Precariousness” on the contrary is the basic structural element (*definitions*) of the social image of the immigrant which weaves a link, highly logical from a semantic point of view, with the cognitions included in the category of “socio-economical integration” in the area of norms. This suggests that in a context with a longer experience in terms of immigration, such as France, the idea of a weak integration associated with one of the variables characterizing this situation - the jobs that are usually for the non-nationals – are the cognitions which define and legitimate at the same time the social status of the immigrant. For the French sample, the image of “marginality and disqualification” seems to be a necessary element, confirming with the existence of the social representation of the immigrant.

These teenagers seem to be well aware that, as demonstrated by the INSEE⁹², «*the percentage of unemployment remains twice as high for immigrants than for non-immigrants: 15.2% versus 7.3% in 2007. Even for an equivalent social and professional category and with the same diploma, active immigrants remain jobless more frequently*»⁹³. Perhaps it wouldn't be so foolish to venture a guess as to the connection between this particular legitimate connotation and the images of the riots of autumn 2005, that brought the dramatic social and living conditions of a segment of the immigrant population to the eyes of the French public. On the contrary, for the Italian sample, these attributes qualify the presence of the immigrant in the host society, but not to the point of being a constituent which in turn condensates around attributes which remind of deviance (“criminality”).

⁹¹ Moliner P., (1996), *Op. cit.*

⁹² Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques.

⁹³ From Le Figaro, 5th November 2008; vedere anche il sito dell'INSEE: *Nombre de chômeurs et taux de chômage des immigrés et des non-immigrés selon le sexe et l'âge (en 2008)*, http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=natnon03346

Only in the next few decades, as immigration in Italy loses its novelty, will it be possible to evaluate whether the image of the “5 P” worker will continue to simply be an accessory element, or, if on the contrary, it will constitute the main axis underpinning the entire SR of the immigrant.

5.2 *The certainty of analyzing two Social Representations*

Before proceeding by interpreting the results we should open a small parenthesis concerning the effects of the other independent variables of which we have evaluated the ability of influencing the semantic-cognitive structures we have just described.

First of all we notice a lack of influence of the family’s social economical and cultural status on the *average ranks* and on the *frequencies* of appearance for all 17 macrocategories forming the architecture of these two representations. The immigrant’s representation is the same independently from the family of origin of the teenagers, be the families endowed with high, medium or low cultural and economical resources

The same considerations can be expressed about the effects of the urban context of residence, namely the “city” variable. The comparison is only possible for the Italian sub-sample in that it was collected in two different town areas (Turin and Genoa). As it happened for the social stand, here the independent variables produce no statistically meaningful variance. The immigrant’s image is always the same independently from the characteristics immigration has at urban level.

After all these two results are not completed unexpected. If there is in literature an abundance of cases related with the ability of influencing social stratification in perceptive and attitudinal processes, this is due to the fact that such dependent variables are placed downstream social cognitive dynamics. The model drawn up by S. Moscovici and G. Vignaux⁹⁴ now proves to be useful.

If we imagine social knowledge as a hierarchy of sources proceeding from the most abstract and general ones, such as the fundamental categories of thought⁹⁵, to the ones closest to interaction and everyday practice, attitudes

⁹⁴ Moscovici S., Georges V., (1994). *Le concept de Thémata*, in Guimelli C., (sous la direction de.), *Structures et transformations des représentations sociales*, éd. Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchâtel, p. 71

⁹⁵ In the diagram proposed by Moscovici and Vignaux the basic categories of thought are defined as *themata*. These are ideas, sources that have a binary character, for ex.: good/evil, right/wrong/ pure/impure, nature/culture, and such. For further information please refer to the previous note.

and stereotypes are placed downstream such diagram and near inter-individual exchanges. On the contrary, SRs, as we have already mentioned, are located at a higher general level. They are the transmission belts that link ideologies with the interactive needs of everyday life. Representations are a storage tank full of knowledge where attitudes and stereotypes take shape. If it is plausible, however, that supplying knowledge as necessary to categorize and evaluate the social world is steered by the actor's social position and his location inside a definite relation field - whence comes the situated character of perceptive and evaluative aspects - it is anyway more difficult for the representations to be influenced by these micro social properties. The SRs are actually the effect and the cause of a general thread of discussion rooted in the common sense knowledge that characterizes a context at a given social and historical time.

The non-variance produced by the social, economical and cultural status as well as by the urban characteristics of migratory dynamics, is a substantial indicator of the fact that we are actually facing two SRs. It is very likely that the immigrant's image processed by the interviewed teenagers has its roots in the more general and complex *immigration situation*⁹⁶ which is characterizing the country right now.

In the following paragraphs we will continue by trying to understand the generative process which has led to the formation of the immigrant's representation which has become the representation for the Italian and French teenagers.

6. The poignancy of two distinct ideological systems and the relative variables of context.

After introducing the most essential features of both SRs one can now pass on to more interstitial and subtle results.

For what the normative register are concerned (*norms*), the area that suggests in which direction the cognitive structure of the data gathered should be read and interpreted, there are significant differences in the two SRs. Firstly, the category of "compassion", which emerges in the Italian representation, is completely absent in the one from Nice. This concept does not refer simply to an open-mindedness or aperture towards diversity,

⁹⁶ The variable of the *immigration situation* has been defined in the introductory paragraph

but rather to the awareness of various types of cognitions that portray the migrant as an unhappy individual. For these reasons, the country of adoption must be patient with those who should be assisted and rescued at all costs since, after all is said and done, “They” need “Us” to help them. This category is marked by a very different structuring force than the French SR. In the Italian case, it is placed within the central core and carries an important normative value that legitimizes the presence of the migrant in the host society while conversely, on the French side, it assumes a weaker more descriptive accent, and is placed in the outermost periphery (*descriptions*).

Based on the hypotheses of the study, we can search for the reasons of this difference in a distinctive aspect of the Italian administration of immigration, particularly because of the role of the Catholic Church. The second paragraph highlights the deep interpenetration of the Italian Church in the migration policy of the country, so as of its messages addressed to an ecumenical spirit, regardless of people’s status and qualities. Given the verbal association test’s results, we think that this Italian administration’s peculiarity can be found in the way of valuing and imaging the presence of immigrants in the society. To use a more discursive language, there is a kind of “compassion”, “paternalism”, arising from the Italian teenagers’ SR which, conversely, is absent from the SR formulated by the French ones.

Two other variables help us to develop the thesis according to which the messages of the church have an impact on the way of thinking of the Italian teenagers : the former is at empiric level and depends strictly on data analysis, while the latter is the result of an observation relevant to the Italian social panorama. First of all the questionnaire used on this study had a section for the religious integration of the young. Both for their *participation in the religious rites* and for *personal religious feelings*, the Italian sample shows scores that are remarkably higher than the French teenagers⁹⁷. Secondly the influence of the Church’s policy about the young shall not be forgotten, particularly under John Paul II’s ruling. Therefore the goal is getting as close as possible to the world of the young, in order to « *renew the dialogue with the world and renew its message* »⁹⁸. If the Italian

⁹⁷ In both cases the difference is statistically significant and the coefficients of association are robust : a) *participation to rites*, $p \leq 0.000$ – phi 0.19; b) *feeling of personal religiosity*, $p \leq 0.000$ – F 43.6.

⁹⁸ Garelli F., (2006), *L’Italia cattolica nell’epoca del pluralismo*, ed. Il Mulino, Bologna, p. 75.

young people are more religious than their French mates, from an attitudinal standpoint, the Church's messages about human mobility phenomena are very likely to be interiorized in a more solid way.

Still for what norms are concerned, the only attribute included in this cognitive subsystem by the French sample concerns the "social and economical integration", which we have already commented. This category is also present in the same semantic area for the Italian SRs, and I think this could suggest an important element common to both samples. Both in a long immigration experience context and in a more recent one, the foreigner presence is legitimated by its socio-economic role. In short, either we refer to legal jobs, not prestigious or completely irregular, in both contexts the foreigner image is surrounded by an interpretative and legitimate halo of functionalist-style.

My personal impression is that, on the basis of the comparison of the *norms* area of the two SRs, different attitudes towards immigration could easily develop. Considering the SRs constitute the socio-cognitive reservoir where attitudinal evaluations of a given object are formed, a series of crucial interrogatives arise spontaneously: will this difference in "compassion" that characterizes the Italian sample lead to a greater openness? Will the French youths' "colder" SRs bring about attitudes of closure and hostility? In my view these results are fundamental and constitute a solid point of departure for further enquiry into attitudes about immigration.

The *descriptions* area carries a very different weight for both SRs. For the Italian group it is of modest importance and fails to take on a noteworthy semantic depth. Given that its function is to empirically translate the contents of the central core by objectifying them around a figurative diagram shared by the group, such a core is based on little objectification and can surely not be considered stable but rather subject to further changes. As far as the French SR is concerned, the situation appears quite different. The significant number of categories and their heterogeneous character seems to faithfully reflect the definition outlined by J.C. Abric, in other words a « *zone of contrasting elements* » whose extreme heterogeneity does not compromise its validity, but rather represents the different possible updates of the central core⁹⁹. All this suggests that the SR has now become stable and that it rests on the extreme

⁹⁹ Abric J-C, (1994), *Les représentations sociales : aspects théoriques. Pratiques sociales et Représentations*, ed. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 35 p.

variety of social images that the subject (immigrant) elicits in a *post-migratory*¹⁰⁰ context. From a comparison of both tables this is indeed the level at which the principal difference between the two SRs comes to light. That of the young Italians is better distributed inside the centre, but it is based on weak objectifications that seem to draw attention to the provisional character of its structure. Instead the SR that emerges in France, though rather polarized toward the “*definitions-descriptions*” side, is distinguished by a more crystallized and finished architecture.

In closing, the area dedicated to the *expectations*, which summarize the most widespread cognitions in the discourse of teenagers surrounding this subject, also bears witness to the specificity of the two SRs. It is densely laden with attributes in the Italian case and lean in the French one. As explained in the previous paragraphs, this is the part of SR that most concretely reflects public discourse, opinions as it were, and is therefore more exposed to outside influence and subject to greater instability. The exiguous number of attributes provided by the French group seems to suggest that diversity in this case doesn't benefit from the status as a noteworthy discussion topic or subject for debate. In the French case, even if the cognitions recalling the idea of “diversity” or “alterity” (“cultural diversity”, “categories of reconnaissance”)¹⁰¹ are to be found in the *central core* of representation, still representation is characterized by a zone of the discourse which is poor in attributes. The Italian situation rich in heterogeneous discourse elements concerning immigration, is very different.

To summarize, the theme of immigration seems very present in the public discourse area of the SR drawn up by the young Italians, which is the opposite of what is noted in the French group, where the subject of immigration seems “surrounded” by a certain discursive taboo. This is, according to me, the very point where the impact of the so-called “model of national integration” is felt, as it takes on a paradigmatic aspect for the French reality. Cultural diversity is in fact a well established factor in the central core of the SR, but remains concealed in the depths of this region

¹⁰⁰ For the definition of *post-migratory* context please see note 37.

¹⁰¹ For what these two categories are concerned — “cultural diversity” and “reconnaissance categories” — we point out that the former one includes the associations which evoke the differences in terms of customs, traditions and religions, while the latter refers to categorizations which are usually applied to the public debate in order to identify the immigrants according to their national or “ethnic” origins, or according to other phenotypic attributes such as skin color, eye shape, hair type and more).

and has little external value. On this matter it is not by chance that the French public debate on the migration matter faces this subject in a mainly indirect manner. In fact there is talk about the Islam matter, the hard social conditions the *banlieus* populations live in, for instance, but the term “immigrates” or immigrated populations rarely represents the dominant subject of the debate. As a matter of fact, this result appears to be found in the SR worked out of the French sample, whose register, aiming at detecting the area of the public speech concerning the *immigrate* is short of attributes (*expectations*). In the following paragraph we will give a more elaborate reading of the last point.

7. Youths on the same wavelength as their respective national messages and the challenges of managing integration.

The results of this study offer a very articulated reading of the way in which the phenomenon of immigration is perceived and evaluated. The comparative approach is what makes it of primary importance. The SR of the immigrant developed by the French sample constitutes a kind of reliable indicator of the immigrant’s social position, since this country has been exposed to the phenomenon for over a century and a half. The immigrant’s relative stability is confirmed by the interpretive model that highlights the polarisation along the *definitions-descriptions* axis. Conversely, the SR worked out by the Italian teenagers testifies to the social traumas linked especially to the question of criminality, which can by times even violently mark the first years of influx. In addition, it is distinguished by a certain instability, that could lead to possible changes in the near future.

Beyond purely socio-cognitive results, the most interesting aspect of the study is to be noticed in the clear socialization of the main ideological postulates from a very young population (17 year old as an average). Firstly, it should not be neglected that the subject being dealt with has a very strong political connotation. Having said this, few of the youths questioned have had any prior experience of political participation such as voting, for example. Both populations are at an age that is barely at the beginning of the phase in a person’s political life that A. Muxel defined as the « *electoral moratorium of the youth years* »¹⁰². In it, the lack of a strong

¹⁰² Muxel A. (2002), *La participation politique des jeunes : soubresauts, fractures et ajustements*, in *Revue Française de science politique*, n° 5/6, 2002, pp. 525-6.

political identity results in very abrupt changes of opinion, sometimes within very short lapses of time. Despite this, the young people studied display a net assimilation of the most important pillars of the political handling of immigration, though what we really should be talking about is integration at a national level. On one hand the attitude of universalist indulgence typical of the Italian situation, on the other hand the imposition of a model tending to forget diversity and pluralism, by avoiding to recognize, and even mention, minority identities, which is typical of the French reality¹⁰³. The talking full of compassion and indulgence, probably largely due to the effect of the messages of the Catholic Church on public debate, seems to be well shared by the Italian teenagers.

On the other hand, talking about the so-called “republican model of integration” obsessed by the lack of good will in acknowledging the “differences”, considered as an actual taboo, translates into a social representation that bans these “differences” from its discursive area.

We could object that this result seems in contrast to the fact that nowadays “diversity” is a widely used slogan in French political class discourse. However the question is more complex than it seems. J. Streiff-Fénart remarks that this concept « *first applied to contemporary French society as a whole, [...] has rapidly designated a particular subcategory of French* »¹⁰⁴: the members of the elite characterized by different physical or cultural features towards the majority group. Therefore the French youth representation’s result seems to indirectly reassert a cognitive gap between “good diversity” and diversity as target of negative evaluations, come to their minds through the concept of “immigrant”. On one side there is the “difference” among the world of media, politics and culture. In the public discourse, immigrants are depicted as those who abandoned their original ethnical and cultural features and in order to honor this sacrifice, they have been raised to the rank of the majority society. As A. Semprini wrote, in this case the difference has a purely « *mercantilist* » function and status; it exists at the rhetorical level¹⁰⁵. A rhetoric which, in the French instance, is found in the political slogans, too and which intends to let through the message that the principles of fraternity and equality are complied with. In

¹⁰³ For further details about this matter please see the paragraphs *The Italian situation* and *The French situation*.

¹⁰⁴ Streiff-Fénart J., (2009), *Op. cit.*, p. 225.

¹⁰⁵ Semprini A., (2000), *Le multiculturalisme*, ed. Presse Universitaire de France – coll. Que sais-je ?, pp. 99-102.

view of what results from the study it appears that the “diversity” the public debate in France admits, refers solely to people or groups who do not experience social difficulties. On the contrary, for French teenagers, the term “immigrant” refers rather to people, groups or communities whose differences and the problems they face make it hard to manage the conceptual object within the frame of the dominant way of thinking and perception of the average citizen.

After these considerations, as I pointed out at the beginning of this paragraph, we have to bear in mind the clear socialization of the respective national and ideological postulates. Despite this generation’s lack of interest in official politics, it nonetheless already presents a relatively well-defined set of values. Other recent Italian and French studies have in fact drawn this same conclusion¹⁰⁶.

Finally, it is difficult to conclude without addressing the question of the implicit forward-looking value of this study’s comparison: will the SR outlined by the French sample perhaps someday take hold of the Italians, too? It all depends on what future turns are taken in the approach to managing the integration of immigrants, on their real opportunities for social participation, and the capacity of the actors from the Catholic world to maintain their role as social mediators between society and the political class.

Having said this however, it remains worrying to note that positions normally attributed to adults are manifested in the thinking of these youths. In order to provide a satisfactory response to the problems arising from multiethnic cohabitation, each country holds part of the truth, both in positive and in negative terms (actions supported by experience, as well as others that experience itself has suggested revising).

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¹⁰⁶ Galland O., (2009), *Les jeunes Français ont-ils raison d'avoir peur ?*, ed. Armand Colin, Paris, pp. 59-98; Garelli F., Sciolla L., Palmonari A., (2006), *La socializzazione flessibile*, ed. Il Mulino, Bologna, pp. 159-192.

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