

In Country Study 2 – Assessment 3

Research Project

Question:

What are Italian perceptions of society and modernity when considering African immigration? How could these cognitive discourses shape public imaginaries of the social climate in Italy's (and more specifically, Genova's) future??

Contents

Introduction.....	p. 3
Contextualisation.....	p. 4
Experimental Design – Methodologies.....	p. 7
Contemporary Italian Society – Manifestations of Intolerance.....	p. 10
Cognitive Discourses – Superficial Tolerance.....	p. 13
Reimagining national identity and discourses of immigration – Public imaginaries for the future.....	p. 17
Conclusion.....	p. 20
References.....	p. 22
Appendices.....	p. 27

Introduction

Immigration and emigration of peoples worldwide is a highly contentious and hyper-relevant issue facing many nations in the contemporary world. This research paper will specifically focus on the social impact of immigration and emigration to and from Italy. Italian society is seemingly struggling with a redefinition of identity, coupled with the demands of an ideological shift from policies of emigration to immigration and back again. This raises questions of Italy's uncertain future in the midst of skyrocketing economic debt, the eurozone crisis and social antagonisms between whether a monocultural or multicultural future should prevail.

This paper will firstly contextualise these issues by reviewing the current body of literature, beginning with an analysis of colonial ideologies and nationalist myths rooted in the collective memory. This is a way to pinpoint the bases of current public sentiments towards immigrants. Building upon this, other academic texts have been selected to elucidate current conceptions of national self-identification, naturalness and otherness in the modern Italian conscience. Dal Lago (2009) writes '...secondary literature is subject to all of the distortions and prejudices of the dominant public opinion...."literature" therefore forces us to continually scrutinize and reflect upon its underlying categories and rhetoric (p. 22). The apparent Italo-centric debate based upon intolerant rhetorics of nationalism, identity and the 'Other', suggests this topic is omnipresent and has continued relevance to Italians and Italian society. The results of this research serve to build upon the existing body of knowledge, dispelling myths and ratifying the proposed realities of immigrants in Italian society.

According to the main themes uncovered in the body of literature, racism and xenophobic rhetorics of Italians opposing migrants (particularly clandestine individuals) are most frightening. An analysis of my personal experiences and the responses of Italians when questioned about these themes, changed the direction of the research. It will examine how Italians view their own social

climate and modernity by pinpointing exactly what antagonisms are felt due to immigrant presence and how they manifest behaviourally and cognitively within the Italian psyche.

Methodologies of participant observation and interviews have been critiqued and employed to study Italian subjects and discuss Italy, particularly Genova, as a host nation not only for immigrants but myself. This research has been framed to focus mainly on Genovese experiences with African immigrants. The goal of this research is to gather credible data through participant observation and interviews of three Italians to elucidate, from an Italian perspective, the cognitive imaginaries by which Italians conduct themselves around African Immigrants, and how Italians see such antagonisms developing (or not) in the future.

Contextualisation

Immigration and Italy has many facets, and can be approached from a plethora of angles, to gain a holistic understanding of the larger picture when focusing specifically on the impact of African immigrants on Genova. In order to contextualise this research within the wider scope of immigration and social stability, several texts were selected to form a basis of secondary research. The themes within which have served as a foundation upon which methodological tests (observation and interviews) were informed, designed and implemented.

Modernity is just over there, (Ben-Ghiat, 2006) offers an historical discussion of the relationship between modernity, colonialism and Italian national identity. Through an analysis of the changing Italian ideologies from imperialist, fascist and supranational ambition, Ben-Ghiat (2006) notes the seemingly backward position Italy occupies as the boot of Europe instead of the desired heart or head (p. 381). This 'backwardness' seemingly remains in the collective memory of Italian society due to the lack of public debate and reflection that would have allowed for the psychological processing of these antagonistic cultural sentiments (p. 389). This text has prompted me to test, through primary research, whether this is a basis for prejudice against immigrants in Italy. My

research will also question to what extent Italians feel their history, identity and ascendancy in Europe as being challenged by the daily influx of new migrants.

Converse to a focus on monocultural superiority and public imaginaries of immigrant 'backwardness', a contemporary article promoting Italian society's capability of attaining multiculturalism is Zincone's *A Model of 'Reasonable Integration'* (2000). Zincone's summary advocates a multitude of recommendations to realise the positive attributes of immigrant presence in Italy. It serves as a beacon of positivity in the body of literature where most studies predict an alarming future of intolerance, without considering alternatives. A major flaw in this literature is the identification of problems relating to 'Italianness' and 'otherness', without a premise for solutions to such problems. Accordingly, this research project will attempt to build upon Zincone's ideas by questioning interview subjects about their future ideals, solutions and personal conflicts pertaining to immigration, testing their current psychological processing of 'immigrant others' from an Italian perspective. This text reminds me to focus on optimistic possibilities for the future of African immigrants, counterbalancing recurrent themes of racism, xenophobia and ignorance.

Harney (2006) presents an almost polar opposite argument to Zincone. This article is one of the more extreme and alarmist writings I have discovered, and could be indicative of the increasingly intolerant public sentiment towards immigrants. Harney (2006) argues that Italy has become nothing more than a geographic bridge for migrants from Africa to Europe (p. 384). This article mainly affirmed my personal experiences through non-controlled participant observation of Migrant-Italian interaction in Genova. It also supported my own predisposed cultural assumptions of Italy as a host nation, being a migrant in my own capacity. Through interview discussions I attempt to tease out Italian feelings of intolerance, how they manifest in day-to-day interactions with migrants and how such notions of disparity, intolerance and the 'naturalmenteitaliano' identity rest in contemporary Italian consciences (Harney 2006, p. 379).

National Identity and the 'other' by Triandafyllidou (1998) is a theoretical explanation of the role of the 'other' in re-defining and transferring national identity (p. 594). This paper is different where most other studies only state the existence of others as a benchmark from which to define 'native' Italians. This research raises questions of identity accordingly. Participant observations and interviews of Italians probed how they self-reflexively consider *their* positions in Italian society and also predict how migrant generations could/could not become future contributors in an economic, political and social sense. This project focuses on *Italian* perceptions of identity, society and modernity and how they see these discourses developing.

Hybrid Italians, Diasporic Africans, Who's/Whose Meticcio¹ (Harris 2008) affirms these themes. Harris posits that immigrants wield discursive power regarding nationalism and definitions of national identity with particular reference to African-ness in Italy. 'Whether manifesting in imagined bodily difference informing national definition or current influx of immigrants, Africa has always formed or defined the socially constructed myth of Italy as monoracial and monocultural.' (Harris 2008, p. 602). Through primary research I was able to analyse Harris' musings from a contemporary viewpoint as to whether Italo-African presence is, or could be, entertained as a future possibility transcending today's cultural and social boundaries (p. 606).

Italy's Racial Cauldron: Immigration, Criminalization and the Cultural Politics of Race (Angel-Ajani 2000) looks at the criminalisation of immigrants and how this reflects xenophobic and racist attitudes toward African immigrants in Italy. This text was selected due to the dominance of immigrant criminalisation in my experiences with, and as a migrant. This theme is pivotal to the ideological and media fuelled public imaginaries of migrant presence in Italy.

Non-Persons: The Exclusion of Migrants in a Global Society (Dal Lago, 2009) is a politically charged publication that provides a comprehensive study of the socio-political institutions that imprint a culture of rejection. Dal Lago's arguments are core to understanding the antagonisms surrounding immigrant hosting as a

cognitive and ideological conflict. They have informed the basis for interview questions and reaffirmed themes of both intolerance and (hypocritical) tolerance uncovered through observation.

Experimental Design - Methodologies

I chose to test the research question and the themes uncovered in secondary research using interviews and a non-controlled participant observations. These methodologies focus on ‘...actions, motives, reactions and feelings...’ based upon qualitative perceptions and the propagation of existing discourses around immigration in the future (Robertson 2006, p. 6). Accordingly, methodologies yielding qualitative results were most appropriate for this cultural study.

Interviews are the primary methodology designed and implemented to yield intricate first-hand data, testing attitudes and ideologies surrounding African immigration, and the reasons why these subjects do/do not function according to social discourses uncovered in the literature. Fowler (1996) advises that interviews can deconstruct such conventions and ‘reassemble’ discourses through the experiences and opinions of Italians in the ‘lived world’ (p. 237). Suitably, I aimed to conduct two face-to-face interviews with Genovese Italians, Angelica Radicchi and Ambra Arvigo, to elucidate contemporary Genovese perspectives on immigrant interaction, behaviour and perception. I also sought to interview two academics within the current body of literature. Interviews from Professor Graziella Parati (Dartmouth College, USA) and Professor Alessandro Dal Lago (Università di Genova, Italy) would have provided insight into the complexities of immigration from the field of academia. Lastly I sought to interview professionals from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) offices in Rome. This was to provide contrast and heighten validity allowing for comparisons between informal and academic responses with those of people dealing with immigration professionally through these United Nations agencies.

Through email and personal correspondence, I managed to interview three people; Radicchi and Arvigo, and an Australian born Italian national who has lived in Rome for 20 years and is currently a Security Officer (S.O.) at IFAD. S.O. requested anonymity for the purposes of this study.

Perhaps the quantity of questions should have been lowered to combat the unwillingness of interviewees to respond. Though, the null response of the UNHCR, IOM and Professor Dal Lago (sent shortened lists of questions) suggests this may not be the case. Parati's responses indicated my questions were too involved for those who understand the enormity of this topic, and the time required to respond in an academic or professional fashion. However, simplifying my questions may have lead to simplified responses, negating the richness of data sought from interviewees of such competence. Another identified weakness is the lack of demographic diversity, which may have affected data validity. All participants are female and two are of similar generational, geographical and cultural upbringing.

The interviews were requested in Italian, though conducted mostly in English, due to my limited grasp of the language. Conducting multilingual interviews implies a degradation of validity due to linguistic misunderstandings and errors in translation (Fowler 1996, p. 236). However, compromising validity lead to richer insight, where subjects could express themselves with the wider vocabulary afforded by their mother-tongue. Each interview included several Italian divergences and allowed interviewees to express themselves in Italian whenever they felt unable to express themselves accurately, lowering the risk of missing data due to 'English-language renderings' (Fowler 1996, p. 236).

The face-to-face interviews were to be recorded using computer software, however technological failure meant Radicchi's interview was rerun with hand typing. Arvigo expressed nervousness when asked permission to tape the interview. Accordingly, hand-typed notes were taken throughout. These interviews were conducted informally to yield honest, uninhibited data from comfortable participants.

This paper has been designed to tabulate and analyse interview data in conjunction to data from the non-controlled participant observation, to achieve what Mishler (1986, p. 52) in Teske (1997) names “Joint construction of meaning”. This combination allows for the inclusion of my opinions as relevant data from a foreign perspective of African immigration to Genova (p. 159).

The purpose of a non-controlled participant observation was to view and accurately record a ‘...phenomena from a mental standpoint as well as from a physical one....sharing in varying degrees, the experiences of the group...’ (Ross 1974, p. 74, 77). This was to observe the bearing immigrant presence has upon the lives of Italians, forming inferences about Italian perceptions towards them. This also tested the way I handled myself in the presence of African migrants and where my own cognitive (in)tolerances manifest behaviourally and psychologically. The observation recorded physical, verbal, spatial and economic interaction in clandestine street vending. This methodology was appropriate as it allowed for the initial inferences that informed interview questions based on the experiences of others and myself.

Ross (1974) stipulates a major pitfall of observation lies in the emotional subjectivity of a researcher, especially when confronted by their findings (p. 76). In the observation, I attempted to identify my own biases and practice active awareness of their negative impact to the validity of my results. Through this current research, I exercised this same awareness, though viewing it from a positive perspective, as self-reflexivity can be crucial to holistic data gathering. Personal interjections provide another layer of complexity, supporting and refuting the themes uncovered in the literature, and questioning the integrity of responses from an integrated yet foreign perspective.

Contemporary Italian society – Manifestations of Intolerance

Taking into account the overarching themes portrayed in the literature, responses to interview questions and personal observation, a seemingly bleak portrayal of Italy's social climate is shaped by public imaginaries of otherness, differentialism, blame and rejection.

Prominent Genovese theorist, Dal Lago (2009), offers a definition of Italian versus migrant existence as a 'person' versus 'non-person' division of humanity. He suggests differentialism is the '...mythologized national and cultural roots.' (p. 14). Radicchi like Arvigo agrees that migrants aren't thought of as real people. Radicchi muses that immigrants are seen as pixels on a screen in a newsflash of criminal activity or just vendors on the streets (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov). Each interview subject agreed that the international perception of Italy is far from the reality, where 'picturesque' stereotypes of Italy are constructed by foreigners, who do not occupy the same social and ideological spaces. Each interviewee supplied different reasons for such divisions. According to S.O., 'Italy is absolutely challenged with internal bureaucracies of administrative and cultural natures' (2011, pers.comm., 20 Nov). She agrees with Harney's (2006) literature that criticises the handling of immigration over the past 20 years since the ideological shift from emigration to immigration, citing Italy lacks, '...cultural expectations or administrative structures to cope with new migrants.' (p. 384). This data provides the frameworks within which widely published discourses of intolerance, racism and xenophobia exist, and directly targets Italian perceptions of society and modernity when considering African immigration.

Arvigo reinforces the discourse of differentialism by explaining, "We are completely different. Maybe it's just because I don't know them. If I had a chance to talk I'd realise....I see them differently when actually they're just like me." (2011, pers.comm., 29 Nov). This prompts me to ask; should *she* make more effort to break down communicative barriers? As inferred by the results of my

participant observation of street vending, interaction between social actors were determined by choice. Italians have a choice to interact and occupy the same cultural and public space. Are predetermined social myths of 'otherness' metaphorically handcuffing her, and Italians by extension, from seeing the opportunity to interact with immigrants in a tolerant manner?

It is interesting to compare the perceptions I used to divide social actors in my observations with the way Italians do. The participant observation was designed from my physiological, behavioural and attitudinal perceptions to categorise social actors, (1. STREET VENDORS, 2. POTENTIAL BUYERS and 3. ITALIAN REGULATORS) (Booth 2011). S.O. uses the 'quantity' of immigrants migrating from Africa as the differentiating factor choking Italian ability to provide for its own nationals, fostering racist and intolerant sentiments. Conversely, Radicchi holds 'quality' of migrants in terms of skill and cultural similarity accountable for differentiating Italy from other European nations in terms of desirability, competitiveness and stability (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov). The quality versus quantity division in the Italian conscience leads me to realise the values held by Italians when determining such categorisations are different to my own. As an *extracommunitaria*, I would not have considered a manifestation of blame a constituent of the discourses of intolerance without this joint construction of meaning.

I was not able to infer, through secondary and observational research, the Italian perception that African immigrants do not want to be here. Arvigo comments, "Africans are jealous of their traditions and try to keep them alive here.", while Radicchi states, "They use the welcome country like the public toilet sometimes.... Some don't want to be accepted....They just come here to send money back to their families." (2011, pers.comm., 29 Nov). I assumed African immigrants came to seek a better life in Italy, risking their lives, some fleeing persecution. It seems Italians shift the blame of their intolerance to immigrant resentment of Italians and Italian culture. It seems easier for Italians to blame the 'other' for societal unrest and uncertainty, than to look within and identify manifestations of intolerance and the roots of such mythologised discourses.

Sentiments of blame appear closely related to discourses of rejection. Arvigo understands there is segregation between Italians and immigrants, but accepts it as a natural constituent of Italian society. As a young Genovese woman, nurtured throughout her life by locally manifested discourses of segregation and indifference, Arvigo says;

When I see African immigrants I think it's normal as they've been here for years....But they're not integrated in Italy...like they don't want to talk to us....Maybe we don't give them *confidenza* because they say Genovese are closed....They sell on the street, not in shops. In universities there are almost no Africans....It's hard to meet them. (2011, pers.comm. 29 Nov).

Arvigo does not seem to question why these discourses exist or how they shape public perceptions of immigrants. Parati (2005) suggests monoculturalism is an artificial construct inherent, and inherited by Italian society. This implies the cognitive activity that renders publically entrenched discourses as consciously, '...reinforced through schooling, the media, and fictive 'hereditary substance of ethnicity' that assigns 'different "social destinies" to individuals...' (Cavarero 2002, p. 97 in Parati 2005, p. 29). The communicative barrier to which Arvigo refers could be a mechanism of rejection that is very much an ideological construct bound to her inherited *Italianness*, *Genovese-ness* or *monoculturality*.

Conversely, Australian born S.O. is an Italian citizen through decent. She uses street vending and her professional life as an opportunity to communicate with immigrants. From a multicultural background, she does not seem to notice communicative barriers to immigrant peoples. "I had some preparedness of perceptions, images and social behaviour with many cultures even if not the African one." (2011, pers.comm. 20 Nov). Physically there is no barrier between Italians and African immigrants. For the premise of the research question, Italian perceptions of society when considering African immigration presents Italo-centric mechanisms of blame, differentialism and rejection, consistently reinforced through the intolerant behaviour and the acceptance of immigrant otherness as their imagined social destiny.

Cognitive Discourses - Superficial Tolerance

When interviewing Genovese Italians from my generation, it seems we've all been predisposed to the information and knowledge gained from, and of, the importance of globalisation and integration. The interviews uncovered some intricacies of immigration and globalisation as cognitively accepted or tolerated. Yet, on a behavioural and attitudinal level, this tolerance seems only to be a product of generational discourses and a cognitive imaginary of how one *should* feel, as apposed to how one *does* feel, in the presence of African immigrants.

Radicchi and Arvigo were asked if they felt their behaviour changed in the presence of such immigrants. Arvigo responded, "No I don't think my behaviour changes. I behave like it is Italian. For me it is the same. But I think some people feel the difference and behave in a different way... Maybe they think they want to steal from them." (2011, pers.comm., 29 Nov). Radicchi also attributes a notion of personal acceptance, yet when delving deeper into behavioural truths, discourses of criminalisation and hypocrisy become apparent. "Sometimes when I'm walking down the street, you know near Porto Antico with all the arches?....I always hold my bags because I am scared....a few weeks ago my bag was stolen....I think it was an African as the street cleaner told me it is usually the Africans who steal bags along that road." (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov).

S.O. treats criminalisation of immigrants as a product of media overkill. She writes, "...over the last 3-4 months [media overkill] about the clandestine arrivals....constantly highlights where a person is from when a crime is committed – e.g. robbery, murder, rape – when they are not Italian! What message is this conveying?" (2011, pers.comm., 20 Nov). The message conveyed is blackness/otherness is criminal. These sentiments support the literature. "Like immigration, crime is ideologically constructed so as to produce societal concern about the state of the nation.... in Italy the image of an African (or foreign) criminal population has become part of the common-sense discourse that organizes and feeds the anti-immigrant sentiment...' (Angel-Ajani 2000, p. 343).

Perhaps the imaginary construction of blackness as criminal is preventing the possibility of multiculturalism in contemporary Italy.

Melossi (2003) attributes criminalisation and xenophobia, to colour or third world status. Arvigo, like Radicchi, distinguished otherness by dark skin, curly hair, traditional clothes, language and movement in groups (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov). Personally, I too established my cognitive opinion of 'African-ness' based on physical, linguistic and behavioural indicators. However, I believe there is an element of contradiction. Personally, colour and status are important characteristics to the social makeup of a society, whether it is indicative of intolerance or acceptance. Yet Arvigo and Radicchi state colour and status don't matter. Superficial tolerance is evident when interviewees were asked if they interact with African immigrants in their personal lives. Arvigo explained, "When I'm here in Genova no. It's really weird. I never talk to them. I've talked to them a lot of times in their countries on holidays [Egypt]. It's not that I don't want to....Our lives are totally different!" (2011, pers.comm., 29 Nov). It seems she acknowledges her superficiality, but is at a loss to explain how local and migrant worlds are ideologically separated in Italy, when she would interact freely in Egypt. Perhaps it is not personal hypocrisy, rather hypocritical constraints binding Italy's social environment. What, within Italian society, makes Africans less valued, approachable, or more criminal than Africans in Africa? What will it take to transgress these imagined constraints? Do discourses of immigrant criminalisation have a place in Italy's future?

From interview data, it seems Italians; the younger generation at least, see the benefits of a multicultural society. Though, it is fraught with contradiction when immigrant presence will only be tolerated when deemed useful, desirable and similar, by Italian standards. Radicchi expresses, "I am learning French and some of them speak French so I can have a small conversation but otherwise I act the same way I usually do." (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov). She will engage with immigrants if she can gain something of personal value only. To me, it is frightening to think of this small instance of what could be considered exploitation, and apply to society at large. Perhaps Radicchi believes this to be an

act of acceptance, though it is wholly conditional. It is for personal gain, and by extension, national gain, only when immigrants have skills that are deemed desirable. This is interesting as the main cognitive barriers are as Harney (2006) writes, 'These alien Others disrupt the stability of the Italian territorial space and enhance the anxieties already present....The Other threatens the nation's enjoyment from within, willing to work too hard for low wages...' (p. 384). This simplistic viewpoint fosters xenophobic and racist sentiments that might become an accepted cultural constituent of Italy's future. Accordingly, how can African immigrants work if they are barred from legitimate employment? How can immigrants contribute positively, if society deems them the wrong *kind* of immigrant?

I then asked interview subjects how their opinion towards me differs from *the African kind* of immigrant. Radicchi explained, "We don't complain of immigrants with high education, mostly immigrants of low education and we're not competitive with other countries in the EU as they have immigrants of higher quality." (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov). This reflects the premise of Ben-Ghiat (2006), where Italian conceptions of difference represent a modernity that is apparently dragging Italy down in the pursuit of Europe. The apparent fixation of this cultural angst is the reputation of being 'down there' and more aligned with 'over there' than the rest of Europe (p. 390-391). Arvigo conversely states, "From the legal point of view, you are like them but we see you from a different way. You're from Australia.... Not more developed than us but you come from a country on the same level and culture so we see you like us." (2011, pers.comm., 29 Nov). She draws her conclusions about me based on cultural rather than economic hypotheses. She is basing her reasons on assumptions of Australian society, and her view of Italy from a proud, Italo-centric position. S.O., someone who has experienced both societies, posits the only similarity between myself and other extracomunitari is one of administration. Due to my country of origin, financial stability and reason to temporarily reside in Genova, I am advantaged in comparison to most African immigrants. S.O., speaks from a less Italo-centric viewpoint:

More and more migrants are employed to work in restaurants and cafes etc., but on salaries lower than Italians. Why should non-nationals be paid less than nationals? There is more exploiting going on than integrating in my opinion, there is a tremendous lack of cultural awareness and ignorance in general. Italian society will need to change significantly, there are even racial differences between nationals of the North and nationals of the south, how can it possibly respond positively to a multi-cultural system. And what about the nomads (gypsies) in all this! The issues are not the African migrants, there is no effective or efficient system in Italy to deal with immigrants of any level (2011, pers.comm. 20 Nov).

In a way, this should force Italians to come to terms with internal antagonisms instead of directing them at 'Others'. It should force them to reflect on their own state of being. It seems the same issues facing immigrants, are being faced by Italy's own nationals. Lack of employment, low salaries, insufficient income to provide for children, food, rent and other expenses are all significant contributors. Are immigrants really to blame for societal anxiety and instability now and into the future?

It seems Italy has a large task ahead to realise the possibility of changing discursive direction from monoculturalism to multiculturalism. Challenges present themselves when media and even authoritative figures act to promote racial intolerance and superficial acceptance. Radicchi muses about street vending, "It's illegal but no action is taken. The Carabinieri do nothing. But I prefer this behaviour to selling drugs and prostitution..." (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov). Here parallels can be drawn with my recorded observations suggesting a symbiotic relationship between authorities and street vendors. They can exist under *impressions* of tolerance, reliant on each other to make a profit. The Carabinieri allowed the African street vendors to continue selling, so they could issue fines to anybody who purchased counterfeit goods. As both selling and purchasing goods from the street is illegal, it is interesting to consider the superficiality of economic profit that outweighs legal and sociocultural antagonisms. This illuminates the intricate relationship between Italian society and immigrant peoples. The extent of tolerance or value each has to the other is ephemeral and undergoing constant renegotiation now, and into the future.

Reimagining national identity and discourses of immigration – Public imaginaries for the future

Whilst analysing secondary and experimental findings, I noticed an element of self-reflection from Italians, coupled with anxiousness that the state cannot provide adequate standards of living nor a sense of future wellbeing. S.O. writes, “Italy is geographically within reach for the African continent, but it is currently not within reach to offer that quality of life they’re desperate for. Italy has its own social, economic and political problems that have impacted on the daily lives of its own nationals, it really cannot offer much to anyone right now.” (2011, pers.comm., 20 Nov). This desperation seems exacerbated by the presence of migrant ‘others’. How can people, antagonised by the lack of governmental management of their own problems, promote a sense of aid to migrants?

Radicchi offers an alternative to overcome anxious perceptions of society and modernity for the future:

...with the eurozone crisis we are worried about it. It is an important historical moment for Italy. We still don't know about our future. I think immigration can be a force to rise our country if we can become attractive for foreigners with high level of education it could be useful for our economy. In a globalised world it is very important to have a multicultural population.... As Italians, we have a very difficult future. We may depend on immigrants – with high level of education and a similar cultural background to pick Italy up and help it function again. Then Italians would be less prejudice towards them (2011, pers.comm. 28 Nov).

Like Zincone (2000), Radicchi realises the positive attributes of immigrant presence, hoping for less migrant intolerance. However, in order to give strength to the economy, the superficial quality of immigrants (according to Italian ideals) must increase. She is assigning a social destiny for African migrants to make up the future Italian labour force. Though how can this issue be addressed when Italy is still, considered by some, monocultural (2011, pers.comm., 20 Nov). It seems Italians recognise but don't realise the potential of current African migration. Arvigo renders current barriers to positive contributions of immigrant workers a waste of strength, “But it's quite impossible if they wanted

to work they couldn't. I've never seen a black man building a house." (2011, pers.comm., 29 Nov).

From these alternative ideals, one could predict the ideological shift from emigration to immigration will revert back to emigration in the near future. "...in this moment of history there are no jobs.... Many Italians are forming diaspora, going to the US, Australia and other EU countries....We are a country of immigration, you know, even in history." (Radicchi, 2011 pers.comm., 28 Nov). What will be the future for Italy, if Italians form their diasporas overseas searching for employment, leaving Italy with a societal demographic dominated by immigrants? What will the fall of the Berlusconi government and the growing threat of eurozone debt mean for immigrants? Will they no longer exist on the margins of Italian society, filling the voids left by Italians emigrating from the countries problems? What will the change in societal makeup mean for the 'naturalmenteitaliano' identity? (Harney 2006, p. 379). Will Italy be forced to redefine its identity?

Triandafyllidou (1998) concludes that, "Through confrontation with the significant other, the national identity is redefined in ways that make it relevant under a new set of circumstances and which respond better to the material, symbolic or affective needs of members." (p. 609). Though, Triandafyllidou fails to discuss resistance to redefinition. Resistance could be considered the root of the Italian perceptions of society and modernity when considering (African) immigration. One can say Italy needs to transgress the imagined constraints preventing a shift from monoculturalism to multiculturalism. Though, is this 'need' a recommendation from a foreign perspective? Is this what Italian people want? What if the 'irrelevant' national identity is riling against the symbolic needs of its members? Will behavioural and cognitive imaginaries of otherness, differentialism, blame and rejection steer the nation away from what it 'needs' to an irrelevant and outdated fixation of an Italo-centric, monoethnic modernity?

Only in the last month, has Italy witnessed both sides of this argument. In late November 2011, Presidente della Repubblica, Giorgio Napolitano, pushed for

legal citizenship rights for children of immigrants born in Italy, to boost the birthrate and allow for rights to legal employment and the chance to contribute to the nation as citizens (La Repubblica, 2011). Whilst in Florence this week, two Senegalese street vendors were shot dead and others injured in what the media reported a murder-suicide where, “...violenza xenofoba e razzista che si è consumata nella capitale della cultura italiana.” (La Stampa para 1, 2011).

It is interesting to ask Italians their projections for the future. They usually revert back to what they know, their past. S.O. thinks nothing will change, basing her predictions on trends over the past twenty years. Radicchi's response surprised me. Post-colonial discourses are typical of nationalist rhetorics where immigration seems almost exclusively focused on the history of 'others' and 'difference'. This may have been an attempt to cloak the hypersensitive realities of the colonial past, and possibly the roots of racism and xenophobia from the collective national memory (Mellino 2006, p. 464, 461). Radicchi focuses on the imagined suffering of her people and attributes empathy to immigrants in her contemporary reality and future ideals. “I would be sad for them. If I were to walk in their shoes I would want to be accepted and given a chance.... We should better know what our relatives felt when they went away. Hanno lasciato il loro cuore in Italia, but they were forced to leave.” (2011, pers.comm., 28 Nov). The relationship between the 'naturalmenteitaliano' and the migrant other is omnipresent. Now Italians must choose which course their social destiny will take, and how their cognitive discourses surrounding immigration will shape their future.

Conclusion

The choice comes down to two alternatives: monocultural intolerance and racial differentialism, or a push for sincere tolerance and the realisation of the benefits a multicultural society may have, shaping the future of all facets of Genova's (Italy's) future.

If monoethnicity is inherent, and inherited by Italian society as Parati (2005) concludes, Italy may stay bound by the cognitive discourses surrounding their bloody colonialist past, xenophobia, racism, rejection, differentialism and blame. What will this mean for the social destiny of African immigrants, and immigrants in general? The question is; can the negative discourses that shape the imaginaries and realities of contemporary Italian society, sustain Italy's future social landscape?

On the other hand, I recently went to Galata Museo del Mare at Porto Antico, Genova. The feature exhibition aims to ignite the public memory of emigration to immigration from the last 150 years to today. *'Memoria e Migrazioni'*, aims to remember the history of migration for Italians, Italians living abroad and new Italians (MuMa 2011). This exhibition focuses historically and contemporarily on Italian migration, specifically in Genova where, *'L'immigrazione non è un fenomeno recente. Da almeno quaranta anni coinvolge la società italiana....con la forza delle grandi trasformazioni epocali (MuMa 2011).* Elucidating the hardships suffered by Italian emigrants, evoking painful colonialist rhetorics and sympathetic sentiments, this exhibition purposefully attempts to keep these sentiments conscious when displaying the stories of hardships suffered by immigrants at the hands of Italian society today. This is not a new topic, but one most endemic and close to the hearts of modern Italians. Today I went into an exhibition and walked out, into the exhibition. Personally it was hard to decipher between reality and the exposition. Dal Lago (2009) writes, *'...by virtue of living among us, migrants are those who require us to reveal who we are: in the discourses we maintain, in the knowledge we produce, in the political identity*

that we claim.’ (p. 19). This exhibition is indicative of Genovese beginning to look inward, back to the roots of current xenophobic and racist intolerance to ignite empathy or sympathy from a colonialist standpoint. Perhaps, for Italians, it will uncloak the discourses of blame and differentiation that allows for the cultural resistance to redefining it’s identity and relying on an air of....‘hypocritical tolerance’...’ (Melossi 2003, p. 381-2). This exhibition prompts the public, in a creative and imaginative way, to question their own cognitive creations and imaginations. Can they imagine the difference their attitudes could make to their future? Will these public imaginaries illuminate the possibility of Italians and migrants to share complementary social and ideological futures? What ‘destinies’ befall immigrants and Italians alike?

Questo lavoro ha permesso di conoscere emozioni, pensieri e fatiche di chi, venuto da un altro paese e da un'altra cultura, ha scelto di diventare un nuovo italiano e un nuovo Genovese, cambiando se stesso e aiutando noi, vecchi italiani e vecchi genovesi a cambiare vita, gusti, abitudini, amicizie (MuMa 2011).

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Appendices

Interview Transcripts:

- A) S.O. 2011
- B) Radicchi, A. 2011
- C) Arvigo, A. 2011

Interviewee: S.O. (Anonymous) Security officer for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Roma Italia.

Date: 20/11/11

Interview Conducted Via Email

The purpose of my research is to gauge public sentiment towards illegal (mainly African) immigration into Italy, and how the public see the presence of such immigrants effecting Italy's social landscape in the future. In accord to ethical considerations these responses will be used solely for academic purposes and deleted upon completion of the project. Your identity can remain undisclosed if that is your expressed wish. Rebecca Booth, Student, University of Technology, Sydney.

Please introduce yourself.

After living in Genova for the past 9 months, I have been exposed to sheer presence of foreign, legal and illegal immigrants in Italy. This daily exposure lead me to focus on the social implications of immigration to Italy as the core of my thesis on Italian society and culture. Due to the enormity of the surrounding issues I have chosen to focus on mainly immigration from Africa, and the social consequences this has and will have on the daily lives of Italians now and in the future.

Firstly, from an Italian perspective, or in your professional opinion, how do you identify an African immigrant in Italy? What image do you think of? What characteristics portray them as African in your view?

As a foreigner from Italian decent, living and working in Italy, my perception of African immigrants are those arriving in overflowing boats to some of the small islands in the south of Italy - often with tragic consequences during their journey to Italy. The thought of this desperate population paying large sums of money in the hope to get a better life in Italy saddens me because it's not going to happen. I realize that Italy is geographically within reach for the African continent, but it is currently not within reach to offer that quality of life they're desperate for. Italy has its own social, economic and political problems that have impacted on the daily lives of its own nationals, it really cannot offer much to anyone right now.

Would this image change if you knew whether they were legal or illegal immigrants?

To be honest, I don't think their status as legal immigrant would impact positively any more than the illegal status. And in my opinion, this would be the same view for immigrants from other countries, eastern Europe, Asia etc., Italy is just too overpopulated and is struggling to providing employment let alone social welfare for its own nationals.

Why do you think these people come to Italy? Do you think Italy provides these people with the new life they seek?

As I mentioned earlier, they are a poor and desperate population. Their home countries are undeveloped and cannot offer them what developing countries can provide. Sadly, their perception of Italy is a far-fetched!

Whilst doing research on this topic, I read an article titled 'The Alternative Economies of Emigration and Immigration, the Real and the Constitution of Italian Nation Spaces' by Harney 2006. This author refers to Italy as nothing more than a geographical bridge for migrants from Africa to Europe. He criticises the way Italy has handled immigration and concludes that Italy lacks the '...cultural expectations and administrative structures to cope with new migrants.' (p. 384). What are your thoughts on this statement?

He's right! It's what I mentioned earlier, Italy is geographically within reach to the African continent but that's it. Italy is absolutely challenged with internal bureaucracies of administrative and cultural nature.

What do you think this may mean for the future and how everyday Italians will deal with an ever-increasing presence of migrants in their daily lives?

From general discussions with Italians during social and informal interactions, I understand that Italians feel resentment because the Government is not managing the problems faced by its own nationals so it is very difficult for individuals to promote a sense of aid to migrants in general. The increasing numbers of migrants are not only a result of the Africans immigrants arriving by boat which is what the media over-communicates. There is no access control to the numerous others arriving from other countries. I have seen an increase at present of Asians for example? Why is that? Why doesn't the law enforcement do their job? In a little over 20 years I have been in Italy, I have seen the trend of illegal migrants in Rome from North Africans, to Polish to Romanians to Moldovans to Peruvians to Indian to North Africans again and I wonder why? Providing refugees' status is one thing but allowing illegal migrants to be hanging around is unacceptable in my view.

Do you interact with African Immigrants in your personal or professional life? If so, how?

I interact regularly with African individuals professionally. As I was born in a multi-cultural country, I had some preparedness of perceptions, images and social behaviour with many cultures even if not the African one. My occupation involves interacting with all nations therefore as immigrants whether legal or illegal, their background is not an issue for me and I never speak or treat anyone differently.

How do you feel/behave when in the presence of an African immigrant, for example, in a shop or bar or in your profession? I've notice mainly African

immigrants selling umbrellas and sunglasses. What do you do and how do you feel when approached by a street vendor for example?

To be honest it doesn't bother me and I try to be generous, I'm the type that will buy from them and without bargaining! I've never felt threatened by them, actually many speak English so it's easier to communicate with them. I feel sorry for them because I understand the 'selling' is their only income. Some of those at street lights washing windows screens can be a nuisance at times when you refuse (usually because the same person just washed the window the day before) they can become over insistent and pushy.

Would this differ if you knew their history/background?

It shouldn't differ but I'd probably feel even more sorry and saddened!

How do you feel about street vending in general? Do you think it is wrong to sell counterfeit goods? What alternative is there?

I think street vending should not be permitted in general because of limited space on pavements creating unnecessary crowds, pick pocketing etc. So you have the vendor who is probably an illegal immigrant and the act of selling is illegal too. Producing counterfeit goods is a crime so it's not ok to sell them either. It must be also noted that unfortunately some of these goods are also available in shops – and streets – by Italian vendors. Is this category of Italians treated any different? An alternative is for the council to allocated legal space/stalls for the vendors to do business but the issue of immigrants' legal status for presence in the country has to also be addressed.

Do you identify with these people in anyway? Do you see any similarities or mainly differences when you identify yourself in comparison to these people?

I don't see similarities with their (illegal) status or business. My presence and employment are totally legal and family/home arrangements are probably not comparable. Perhaps the only similarities I can identify are behaviour as a foreigner and certain perceptions the Italians have of foreigners are generalised. Speaking another language with my family, eating 'non-italian' food etc.,

Personally, I see some similarities between these immigrants and myself. As an Australian national, I too have migrated to Italy. I am not European, I am legally not allowed to earn an income here and I too had to apply for a Permesso di Soggiorno. What do you think makes me similar/different to other migrant 'extracomunitari'?

I think the only similarity you have is the process of the administrative status to obtain legal presence in Italy. However, the difference is that you may be advantaged in the process because of your country of origin, financial stability, and reason to temporarily reside in Italy.

In your opinion, how do you think Italian people generally feel about African immigration at present?

I think there has been overkill by the media over the last 3-4 months about the clandestine arrivals by boat of Africans in the south of Italy which you have to feel sorry for when you learn of the conditions of their journey and how many are lost at sea. However, as I mentioned earlier, in my opinion, the Italians probably feel that any type of immigration at present in the country is out of control – regardless of where they come from – immigration is not managed effectively by the Government. And, Italy is not in a position to offer anything because the same issues are being faced by its own nationals ie. lack of employment including the low salaries, insufficient income for food, rent and other expenses, providing for children. Just look at the birth rate in Italy which in my opinion would confirm this.

Do you think there is more tolerance, intolerance or indifference?

I think there is a lot of intolerance and ignorance.

During my research, I have noticed that the current body of literature surrounding immigration to Italy presents themes of xenophobic and racist rhetorics pertaining to nationalism, identity and 'Otherness'. Do you believe this is a prevalent notion within contemporary society? Why do you think it exists/does not exist?

Do you believe there is a culture of rejection towards migrants in Italy?

To a certain extent, I believe there is an element of rejection. There is insecurity in case the Government should choose to assist the migrants more efficiently than its own nationals. Furthermore, the media constantly highlights where a person is from when a crime is committed – e.g. robbery, murder, rape – when they are not Italian! What message is this conveying?

How do you think the recent flows of migrants from Africa to Italy have affected Italy's reputation with other nations in the European Union?

To be honest I'm not sure, but there is clearly an inconsistency of response and assistance by the various EU countries.

According to you, is this beneficial or detrimental to Italy in the future?

I can't see it being beneficial unless the EU countries agree and practice a common approach to these migrants.

Now think ahead, 10 years from now, what do you think this means for Italians in the future? Do you think these perceptions will become stronger, weaker or stay the same?

Reflecting on the trend over the last 20 years, not much will change.

The Italy that I have seen seems very multicultural with the sheer presence of migrants calling Italy home. Through day-to-day living here myself, I have observed both tolerance and intolerance when Italians interact with migrants. To me, it seems to be very “Us vs. Them” behaviour. Do you share this view? Do you perceive Italian society to be more multicultural or monocultural?

I think Italian society is more monocultural. As mentioned earlier, I was born in a multi-cultural environment and can clearly see differences. The Italian society can be slightly superficial when it comes to integrating. The education system should try to improve cultural awareness in the schools if it cannot be set correctly and conveyed in the home. My children went to an Italian early childhood school and were so relieved when they moved to an international school where they immediately share that they were happier because they were with ‘other’ children like them! With the almost perfect Italian I speak and physical Italian traits, integrating socially was not easy in the Italian school environment. So many ‘whys’ were asked often in a rude and offensive manner, like we were from Mars.

What does this mean for the future of “Italian” culture? Do you feel that Italians entertain a possibility for a multicultural future that is accepting of migrants, especially those from Africa?

More and more migrants are employed to work in restaurants and cafes etc., but on salaries lower than Italians. Why should non-nationals be paid less than nationals? There is more exploiting going on than integrating in my opinion, there is a tremendous lack of cultural awareness and ignorance in general. Italian society will need to change significantly, there are even racial differences between nationals of the North and nationals of the south, how can it possibly respond positively to a multi-cultural system. And what about the nomads (gypsies) in all this! The issues are not the African migrants, there is no effective or efficient system in Italy to deal with immigrants of any level.

Thank you for your time.

Interviewee: Radicchi, A. Studentessa Scienze Politiche, Università degli Studi di Genova, Genova Italia.

Date: 28/11/11

Location: My house, Genova Italia.

Interview recorded via hand-typing and dictation

Begin by reminding interviewee of the premise of my assignment. Urging them to give me honest (personalised answers) and in accord with ethical considerations explaining how I will record them, what their responses will be used for and that their identity can remain undisclosed if they wish.

I've lived in Genova for over 10 months now. Before living here I had never been to Europe let alone Italy before. I was completely unaware of the immigrant presence in Italy, Genova in particular. I wanted to know, from a local's perspective, what you imagine when thinking about African immigrants in Genova? Can you describe the image that pops into your head?

The dark skin curly hair and always with other Africans their language. The appearance.

Would this image change if you knew whether they were legal or illegal immigrants? No prejudice legal or illegal they are always humans looking for a better life.

For the state is an important point but not personal.

I find it really difficult to identify the origins of many people. How do you identify an African immigrant? What do you look for to make you think they are an immigrant? And what about them makes you think they are African? (Prompt: Appearance? Language? Behaviour? Otherwise?)

Why do you think these people come to Italy (Genova)? Do you think Italy provides these people with the new life they seek?

No I think they're really disappointed as in their countries they have an image of Italy very different from the reality. When they come here looking for a solution – like girls are promised they are stars but then they get here and they are prostitutes. And now with the eurozone crisis we are worried about it. It is an important historical moment for Italy. We still don't know about our future. I think immigration can be a force to rise our country if we can become attractive for foreigners with high level of education it could be useful for our economy. In a globalised world it is v important to have a multicultural population.

Do you interact with African Immigrants? If so, how?

Sometimes, I am learning French and some of them speak French so I can have a small conversation but otherwise I act the same way I usually do.

How do you feel/ behave when in the presence of an African immigrant, for example, in a shop or bar? I've notice mainly African immigrants selling umbrellas and sunglasses. What do you do and how do you feel when approached by a street vendor for example?

Hmm it depends. Sometimes when I'm walking down the street, you know near porto antico with all the arches? When I walk down there I am scared. I always hold my bags because I am scared. For example a few weeks ago my bag was stolen in Centro Storico. I think it was an African as the street cleaner told me it is usually the Africans who steal bags along that road.

How do you feel about street vending in general. Do you think it is wrong to sell counterfeit goods? What could they do instead?

But It's illegal but no action is taken. The carabinieri do nothing. But I prefer this behaviour to selling drugs and prostitution. There isn't really an alternative. They can't get jobs. Even Italians can't get jobs here so we are going abroad. It's just the same when you look at it that way I suppose.

Would this differ if you knew their history/background?

Here the doctors would have to start over again. Bulgarians professors are now cleaning ladies. They just can't get a job. But it's the same for Italians with lack of jobs. Nothing we can do but go abroad. I would be sad for them if I were to walk in their shoes I would be accepted and given a chance. Italian opinion influence by media....not people with sad history background. Just seen as pixels not real people just a news flash not real humans.

Do you identify with these people in anyway? Do you see any similarities or mainly differences when you identify yourself in comparison to these people?

Yes behaviour and look different. 'Use welcome country like the public toilet sometimes but I don't want to generalised. Some don't want to be accepted. They don't like to be here. Just here to send money back to their families. Harbour black guys are mainly from Senegal and they are devoted to their witch god and they send money to him not only to their families.

I see some similarities between these immigrants and myself. I too have migrated to Italy. I too am not European, legally aswell, I am not allowed to earn an income here, I too had to apply for a Permesso di Soggiorno. What, do you think makes me similar/different.

We don't complain of immigrants with high education, mostly immigrants of low education and we're not competitive with other countries in the EU as they have immigrants of higher quality.

In Australia there are lots of educated peoples. Quantity it's quality....we don't complain about Asians as they do Africans or south Americans. We need to become attractive as a destination for highly educated Qualified immigrants to become competitive with the rest of Europe. Most are illegal and are risking their lives to come here dying on the boats from Africa in search for a better life. If this is what they come fore then their lives must have been terrible. But now we need immigrants to come here and help Italy.

In your opinion, how do you think Italian people generally feel about African immigration at present? Do you think there is more tolerance, intolerance or indifference?

Intolerant, because in this moment of history there are no jobs and in our opinion we have the feeling they are stealing jobs and we must distinguish among opinions eg Lega Nord eg Veneto lombardia. But I am centre left. I understand them but in my opinion Italy is the wrong country for immigrants as we don't have a future and for them it would be even worst. Many Italians are immigrating to US AUS EU – diaspora.

We are a country of immigration. We should better know what our relatives felt when they went away. They left their hearts in Italy but forced to leave. Hanno lasciato il loro cuore in Italia.

Why do you think the wider Italian society think of African immigrants this way?

Africans behave in a way that makes people talk....steal bags.....steal jobs.

Do you agree with this general view?

A few weeks ago my bag was stolen....I think it was an African as the street cleaner told me it is usually the Africans who steal bags along that road.

Now think ahead, 10 years from now, what do you think this means for Italians in the future? Do you think these perceptions will become stronger, weaker or stay the same?

Stronger. Our future is so uncertain. Many people are already blaming the immigrants for stealing jobs, sending money to their home countries and acting against us. Behaving in a way that is against Italian laws. Though I like to think it will actually become weaker. As Italians, we have a very difficult future. We may depend on immigrants – with high level of education and a similar cultural background to pick Italy up and help it function again. Then Italians would be less prejudice towards them.

Interviewee: Arvigo, A. Studentessa Giurisprudenza, Università degli Studi di Genova, Genova Italia.

Date: 29/11/11

Location: My house, Genova Italia.

Interview recorded via hand-typing and dictation

Begin by reminding interviewee of the premise of my assignment. Urging them to give me honest (personalised answers) and in accord with ethical considerations explaining how I will record them, what their responses will be used for and that their identity can remain undisclosed if they wish.

I've lived in Genova for over 10 months now. Before living here I had never been to Europe let alone Italy before. I was completely unaware of the immigrant presence in Italy, Genova in particular. I wanted to know, from a local's perspective, what you imagine when thinking about African immigrants in Genova? Can you describe the image that pops into your head?

When I see African immigrants I think it's normal as they've been here for years but its common. But they're not integrated in Italy they form distinct groups and behave like they don't want to talk to us I don't know why. Maybe we don't give them confidenza because they say Genovese are closed and don't make friends with everyone. Maybe youger ppl like me should try to talk with them but it's pretty hard. In universities there are almost no Africans – only Italians. It's hard to meet them. During high & middle school we meet but don't become friends. They stay in groups. But when they work their jobs are always the same...but they do things that make it hard to talk –they sell on street s not in shops.

Would this image change if you knew whether they were legal or illegal immigrants?

I cannot tell between legal and illegal. For me it's the same but most of them are illegal. Think ppl from Ecuador are more legal than them. They come from closer countries so they can arrive with boat so we can control them.

I find it really difficult to identify the origins of many people. How do you identify an African immigrant? What do you look for to make you think they are an immigrant? And what about them makes you think they are African? (Prompt: Appearance? Language? Behaviour? Otherwise?)

Africans are easier to recognise as they're really black. Ppl from sud America not pale but not so black. How they're dressed. Women wear typical clothes from Africa – sometimes not. And ppl from south America are more integrated and try to act like us. Africans are jealous of their traditions and try to keep them alive here.

Why do you think these people come to Italy (Genova)? Do you think Italy provides these people with the new life they seek?

I don't know why they come to Genova. I think they could go to other cities in Italy and maybe they would be better. I don't know how immigrants chose Genova. Maybe they know someone who lives here who persuades them to come. But I don't think they can find a lot here. Italians try to find things in other cities or countries. There are a lot of old ppl. There isn't much for an African. But I wouldn't choose it.

Do you interact with African Immigrants? If so, how?

When I'm here in Genova no, it's really weird. I never talk to them. I've talked to them a lot of times in their countries on holidays. It's not that I don't want to but there is no chance. Our lives are totally different. Different worlds.

How do you feel/ behave when in the presence of an African immigrant, for example, in a shop or bar? I've noticed mainly African immigrants selling umbrellas and sunglasses. What do you do and how do you feel when approached by a street vendor for example?

No I don't think my behaviour changes. I behave like it is Italian. For me it is the same. But I think some ppl feel the difference and behave in a different way. For them it is strange to see them in a bar. But normal for ppl to see them selling on the beach. Maybe ppl when they see them they behave more carefully. Maybe they think they want to steal from them. They feel not in danger but not so quiet to be around them

How do you feel about street vending in general. Do you think it is wrong to sell counterfeit goods? What could they do instead?

Yes for me it's not wrong – they don't disturb me. But they could do other jobs. They have strong bodies. It's a waste of strengths. But I've noticed in Italy immigrants share the type of jobs. Ppl from East Europe are carpenters. Ppl from Africa usually sell things on the street. Ppl from South Am instead like women take care of anziani. South American more integrated. The men have more common jobs. I think they should try to do other things. But it's quite impossible if they wanted to work they couldn't. I've never seen a black man building a house.

Would this differ if you knew their history/background?

Yes. Usually I think most ppl when we see them we don't know their history. If we did we can understand better what pushed them to come here. Their dreams. We would see them more as normal people. They're normal but we see them as immigrants. It's disappointing they deserve the same chance as we have. We think they don't study. But we don't know so we will never know.

Do you identify with these people in anyway? Do you see any similarities or mainly differences when you identify yourself in comparison to these people?

We are completely different. Maybe it's just because I don't know them. If I had a chance to talk I'd realise they are like me. If there's a 22 yr old girl or guy they might have the same dreams, problems. I see them differently when actually they're just like me. Problem is we don't speak to each other.

I see some similarities between these immigrants and myself. I too have migrated to Italy. I too am not European, legally as well, I am not allowed to earn an income here, I too had to apply for a Permesso di Soggiorno. What do you think makes me similar/different.

From the legal point of view you are like them but we see you from a different way. You're from Australia, ohh more lucky than us. Not more developed than us but you come from a country on the same level so we see you like us. For some ppl the colour of the skin counts. For me it's the same. But some people if you were a black Australian. Some people have bias.

In your opinion, how do you think Italian people generally feel about African immigration at present?

I think the biggest cities we're used to African immigrants. Pretty normal. We accept them even if there are lots they are quite racist. In the north there are more ppl that don't like them like Lega Nord. See them as ones that steal jobs and in the south I don't know. I think there is diff between small and big. Genova is big.

Do you think there is more tolerance, intolerance or indifference?

I think African people are a bit invisible and ppl don't actually care about them even worse. While the other immigrants like come from Romania that have a worse reputation. When u watch the news and u read something almost always from that country that did it. So people would want them to go back to their country. For Africans maybe old people that are not used to them, black, want them to leave. There is more intolerance to =wards ppl from eastern Europe.

Why do you think the wider Italian society think of African immigrants this way?

I think it is because Africans try to stay in groups isolati so we know they are here but it's like they're not because they don't communicate. We never talk to them. They do jobs where it's hard to stay in touch. We don't see them as much as south Americans in daily life. Serving you in bars.

Where do you source information on African immigration? Literature? Media? Politicians? Friends? Family? Otherwise?

I always read the newspaper but also on the tv I listen to some news and I told u what I see on the street. We don't talk about it a lot but it's not a common topic. Most info from the news papers. La Stampa.

**How do you think the recent flows of migrants from Africa to Italy has affected Italy's reputation with other nations in the European Union?
(Prompt: France seeking stricter border control perhaps...)**

I remember when that happened I was studying EU law. I think we had L'obbligo to host them but also France to host them. They were coming from war-torn country so was unfair to leave them on a boat in the sea. They were right to come to our countries. I don't think it was right that France wanted them to stay and Italy and stop. They should have gone where they wanted, to Germany or France. They didn't want to stay here. They just arrive here as it's a closest country but now they wanted to move one. But our politicians didn't make respect their opinions. We did what France wanted. Problem with policy and politics. It was their right to come here and they couldn't do anything.

Now think ahead, 10 years from now, what do you think this means for Italians in the future? Do you think these perceptions will become stronger, weaker or stay the same?

I think it will be better. Maybe in these years immigrants will have children and their childrens will go to our school and make friends with Italian kids. Little kids are different from adults and for them it's the same if you're black or white. They will be better integrated and speak better Italian. Younger people are more integrated. The problem is their parents. 50 yr old women and men. So in 10 years it will be better. We will be used to them and we won't see the difference.

The new president said the children of immigrants born in Italy must be Italian. As it doesn't happen now. U must be born here and never leave before you're 18 or u can't get citizenship. I read on the newspaper of a guy 21 born and lived in Italy but when he was 12 he went to Egypt for a summer 5 months and here in Italy they didn't give him citizenship because of this. It's stupid. He's Italian born and lives here and speaks Italian. I think ppl born here should be Italian for 3 years or something. Not 18 years.

In Puglia illegal immigrants work in tomato fields, paid like nothing but forced to do that as they have no money. It's harder to find job if you're not legal. It's one of the main problems as I think you can find. I've never thought about it. It's a vicious circle. Complicated if you don't have the papers or money.

According to you, is this beneficial or detrimental to Italy in the future?

I think they can contribute as I read somewhere if we had no immigrants our birth-rate would be negative. We're getting older and older. Without them it would be a mess. Very few young ppl compared to old ppl. It's good they come to Italy.