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Giving a Face to Immigration and Integration Processes: The Use of Photovoice with Italian Young Adults

Nadia Rania

University of Genoa, nadia.rania@unige.it

Laura Migliorini

University of Genoa

Paola Cardinali

University of Genoa

Stefania Rebor

University of Genoa

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Abstract

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Keywords

Photovoice, Young Adults, Intercultural Integration, Qualitative Methods, Immigration

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Giving a Face to Immigration and Integration Processes: The Use of Photovoice with Italian Young Adults

Nadia Rania, Laura Migliorini, Paola Cardinali, and Stefania Rebora
University of Genoa, Genoa, Italy

This study used Photovoice to investigate the perspectives of majority youth in Italy about the immigration and integration processes. The participants were 99 Italian young adults living in two northwestern regions of Italy. Images produced by young adults and subsequent discussion focused on the benefits, challenges and possible solutions to foster intergroup integration. The proposed solutions involved intergroup contact, deepening knowledge of other cultures, and recognition of immigrants' rights. These solutions demonstrate young adults' openness toward immigrants and their attitude regarding intercultural integration. Keywords: Photovoice, Young Adults, Intercultural Integration, Qualitative Methods, Immigration

From a social psychology perspective, immigration is an ecological transition that involves deep changes in the contexts of interaction for both natives and to immigrants (Cushner, 2008). Many European nations became countries of immigration during the second half of the last century. The EU-27 foreign population (people residing in an EU-27 member state with citizenship from a non-member country) on 1 January 2013 was 20.4 million, representing 4.1 % of the EU-27 population. In absolute terms, the largest numbers of non-nationals living in the EU on 1 January 2013 were found in Germany (7.7 million persons), Spain (5.1 million), the United Kingdom (4.9 million), Italy (4.4 million) and France (4.1 million) (Eurostat, 2014). Some countries have a long history of immigration (France, United Kingdom and Germany) and other have a relatively brief and recent experience (Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal). As of 1 January 2011, the proportion of Italy's population accounted for by foreign immigrants was approximately 7.5% (4,570,317). Although there is a polycentric nature of migration in Italy (196 nationalities represented in Italy), approximately half of the immigrants (51.1%) come from only five countries. The largest national groups by proportion of resident foreigners are the Romanians (21%), Moroccans (14%), and Albanians (10.6%) (Istat, 2011). Because of the great diversity in minority groups there is no single characteristic (e.g., religion, values, behavior) that defines immigrants in a particular ethnic group. The international immigration is having a deep effect on European countries: cultural heterogeneity has become a structural element of Italian and European society that allows natives and migrants to have experiences characterized by daily contact. Among the problems that are caused by migration are the reactions of the host societies that face these new situations of coexistence. In the broader European context, ethnic and religious diversity is similarly on the rise, and this diversity can contribute to important intercultural dialogues and to integration. Despite this, immigration is still portrayed as both a source of problems and an opportunity for individuals and communities. Dandy and Pe-Pua (2010) outline some of the benefits associated with immigration (enrichment of the receiving culture, more positive views of intergroup contact, economic advantage) but also some critical issues (clear divisions between different cultural groups, intolerance, racism, discrimination, crime and violence, social inequality).

Within a psycho-social framework, this intercultural model describes integration as a multidimensional process of living together among culturally and ethnically different individuals and groups based on respect for diversity and common respect for human rights

and democratic institutions (Besozzi, Colombo & Santagati, 2009; Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault & Senécal, 1997). Intercultural integration is a multifaceted and multilevel issue (Boski, 2008). Integration at the individual level is associated with acquiring an intercultural mindset, a relational level that implicates intercultural communication and relationships, at a formal level, integration alludes to the constructing new norms that can help to resolve shared problems. Studies about psychological the aspects of the relationships between different cultures mainly focus on the minority perspective (Kunst & Sam, 2013; Lee & Bean, 2010). However, people's attitudes towards immigrants is one of the most important topics in social psychology studies and the need to consider the host society's perspective, to reach a deeper comprehension of relationships in a plural society is becoming stronger (Frankenberg, Kupper, Wagner, & Bogard, 2013). This perspective allows for highlighting the interactivity of acculturation processes and their importance for integrating minority groups. In such a multicultural context, it is important to consider the majority's youth perspective because today's young people will be the protagonists of future social changes. Integration into a society can be considered a very complex process or outcome. Intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954), which states that interactions between members of different groups can promote positive attitudes and reduce prejudice, is one of the most powerful theoretical approaches for improving outgroup attitudes in mixed societies (Andolina & Myers, 2003; Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). Considerable research has been devoted to understanding adults' immigration, acculturation and intercultural relationships. In particular, recently, Arasaratnam (2013) in a review of the literature on multiculturalism using inductive thematic analysis, revealed four themes more present in studies: Multicultural Education, Attitudes toward Multiculturalism, Multicultural Interactions, and Multicultural Identity. ; Other authors (Tip, Zagefka, Gonzalez, Brown, Cinnirella, & Na, 2012), in three studies investigated the effects of majority members' perceptions of minority members' acculturation preferences and perceived identity threats on their support for multiculturalism. Considerably fewer authors addressed these phenomena among youth: a study by Frankenberg and colleagues (2013) gives particular attention to the question of how Germany's history of migration, immigration policies, and public attitudes toward migrants influence the transcultural adaptation of children and adolescents from different ethnic backgrounds; another study examined whether how migrants are defined has implications for how majority group adolescents' evaluate their maintenance of the heritage culture. Using an experimental questionnaire design, the findings demonstrate that when migrants are considered to have left their country on a voluntary basis, endorsement of cultural maintenance is lower than when migration is perceived to be involuntary (Gieling, Thijs, & Verkuyten, 2011). Moreover, Hatzigeorgiadis, Morela, Elbe, Kouli, and Sanchez (2013) review the existing literature on the integrative role of sport among young individuals and groups with differing cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, multicultural education practices are considered desirable and necessary for developing positive inter-ethnic relationships; the positive effects of multicultural education are interpreted in terms of children's improved cultural knowledge and understanding, and the establishment of anti-racism norms within the classroom (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2013). However in the Italian context there is a little research on phenomena related to youth: De Caroli, Falanga, and Sagone (2012) analyzed subtle and blatant prejudice toward Chinese people expressed by Italian adolescents and young adults, with and without friends from other ethnic groups. Matera, Stefanile, and Brown (2011) investigated the role of first- and second-generation immigrants' desire for culture maintenance and intercultural contact in affecting majority members' intergroup attitudes; Pagan and Robustelli (2010) studied young people's attitudes toward multiculturalism. The greater part of these studies employ quantitative research methods to study the phenomenon, but there do not appear to be emerging studies that had the objective of understanding the

possible strengths and challenges of migration. Typically researchers suggested possible solutions, based on their results. In our study, however, we will “give voice” to young adults so that, based on their experiences, they can find solutions to a positive coexistence between groups. In contrast to previous studies, the present research used Photovoice to investigate the benefits and challenges of immigration because this method has tremendous potential; it allows participants to discuss, reflect and find solutions. Based on the presented literature, this study aims to investigate the perspectives of majority youth in the specific Italian context to stress attitude toward immigration as an essential element of immigrants’ integration and to understand both these youths’ perceptions about the benefits and challenges of immigration and the possible solutions that they propose.

Photovoice and Young Adults

Photovoice is a participatory action research tool that involves people in communities (Rania, Migliorini, Rebora, & Cardinali, 2015), and is based on the concept that they are experts on their own lives; they are co-collaborators in the knowledge creation process (Gonzales & Rincones, 2013) and are free to express issues that are of importance to them (Genoe & Dupuis, 2013). Indeed, it animates participants to identify, represent and improve their communities using a photographic technique (Wang, 2006). Photovoice has three main goals: record and consider one’s own community’s strengths and weaknesses, by involving people in a process of active listening and dialogue; promote introspection and critical dialogue about personal and community issues; and reach policy makers (Wang, 2006). Wang and Burris designed Photovoice in 1994 as a combination of three theoretical frameworks: Freire’s education for critical consciousness theory (1973) helps participants to understand and attempt to act on historical, political and social conditions; feminist theory extracts participants’ appreciation of subjective experiences, including meaning recognition and political commitment; and documentary photography, is largely used to give voice to the most vulnerable people in order to tell their stories and their perceptions of the world. Photovoice is used in different fields of investigation. Wang (2006) notes that a specific characteristics of youth and Photovoice is young people’s involvement in all aspects of the research: a co-learning process in which young people, policy makers and researchers contribute to and learn from each other and their own expertise; a reflective process to develop a critical consciousness; an enabling process; and a balance among the goals of research, action and evaluation.

Photovoice has three areas of impact on youth that were identified by Catalani and Minkler (2010): it increases empowerment, when youth feel that they are the owners of a project’s outcome; it amplifies how youth understand their communities and their needs; and it intensifies community engagement. Aldridge (2014) also maintains that the use of photographic methods can help young people to challenge prejudices about their lack of competency as decision makers or active citizens, and can help to highlight youth’s agency and resilience rather than their susceptibility.

Restricted to young people, Photovoice was applied by Moss (1999a, 1999b) in projects about young peer educators and by Strack, Magill, and McDonagh (2004) to determine how the characteristics of adolescents might influence the Photovoice process. Necheles and colleagues (2007) used it to develop health advocacy processes and reveal which behaviors young people believed influenced their health. Wang (2006), Nicotera (2008) and Gant et al. (2009) centered this technique on the civic engagement of youth for community change. White, Bushin, Carpena-Méndez, and Laoire (2010) studied contemporary Irish childhood, and Johansen and Le (2012) investigate youth perspectives on multiculturalism. In Italy, Santinello, Facci, Lenzi, Aleotti, and Cristini (2008) used

Photovoice with university students to initiate empowerment processes discussions and reflections about university life. Arcidiacono, Procentese, and Di Napoli (2007) used Photovoice with youth to investigate the power perceptions in their local communities, and this technique was also recently used with adolescents to promote community changes (Caso, 2011).

Only a limited number of studies have utilized Photovoice methodology with youth to investigate the immigration process; in particular in Italy, there is a little research on this topic, using this method (Mastrilli, Nicosia, & Santinello, 2013; Rania, Migliorini, Cardinali, & Rebor, 2014).

The Aims of the Present Study

This study enriches the literature that investigates the perspectives of majority young adults, in the specific Italian context, to examine their attitudes toward immigration, which is an essential element in the integration process.

The topic of immigration emerged in a brainstorming session during an academic course titled Qualitative Methods, which one of the authors teaches, participants were asked to think about current society and its problems. Immigration appeared to be the most meaningful issue to the participants, who wanted to study it in depth. In an attempt to better comprehend how young adults perceive immigration and integration processes, Photovoice was employed to explore their perspectives on benefits, challenges and possible solutions for increasing intergroup integration. Our study was designed to answer the following questions:

- What are the benefits of immigration from majority Italian young adults' perspectives?
- What are the challenges that the Italian context faces from majority Italian young adults' perspectives?
- What solutions do Italian young adults hypothesize for a positive coexistence with immigrants?

The present study sought to develop a more complex and deeper understanding of this issue, underlining the interconnections between different levels and the circular relationships that exist between individual and environmental variables.

Method

Participants

Ninety-nine Italian undergraduate students of Psychology (95.1% females and 4.9% males), were selected through convenience sampling. All were taking the qualitative methods course, and all had experienced the technique of Photovoice as explained in class. Participation was free and did not involve additional credits if the students did not implement the theoretical skills they had learned related to Photovoice. The participants lived in two North-Western regions of Italy and had a mean age of 20 years. They completed schedules of their contact with immigrants: 4% of the students reported having no contact, encountering immigrants only in cities but not speaking with them; 17.2% met immigrants often in their neighborhoods and at work and school, but they only spoke with them if they had direct connection with the immigrants; 25.3% met immigrants often in their neighborhoods and at work and school and spoke frequently with them; 44.4% had immigrant friends and 9.1% had immigrant relatives.

The participants were distributed into 10 groups of 10 to 12 members, and the members of each group differed in gender, age, and contact with immigrants and socio-cultural level.

Procedure

Participants took part in a workshop that was organized during class, to present the aim of the investigation, the Photovoice methodology and the basics of the photographic technique. During the workshop, participants also received information on Photovoice image use and signed consent forms that allowed the photovoice images to be used in the investigation. Participants were encouraged to think about “immigration and intercultural integration’s benefits and challenges.”

Following a period of photographic activity of one week participants had to photograph what best represented the topic to them. In addition, they had to select three of their pictures, add a comment to each and send these by mail to the team of investigators. In the third phase, a facilitator, that is one of the members of the research team, met each group and showed and debated the pictures and the feelings produced by viewing them. First, each participant showed his photos and explained their meanings; the group observed the full collection of pictures, ascertained the main topics in them and discusses them. The discussion followed the “SHOWeD” method (Wang, 2006), which allowed for deeper and more critical dialogue about the topics. To reach its objective, this method used the following questions:

- 1) What do you **S**ee here?
- 2) What’s really **H**appening here?
- 3) How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
- 4) **W**hy does this problem or this benefit exist?
- 5) What can we **D**o about this?

The facilitator had to develop communication, encourage the group members’ active participation when the pictures were presented and assist critical discussions about the main topics. During the Photovoice discussions, the pictures were divided into thematic areas (e.g., school, sport, work...) and the students outlined and debated how each theme could be a benefit or a challenge in immigration processes. In this phase participants identified solutions to foster intercultural integration.

When the discussions ended, each group decided what they wanted to communicate during the final event and then created a poster to summarize the debate. The discussions were audio registered and transcribed *verbatim*.

The last phase entailed the students’ presenting their posters to all of the other groups and local authorities during a meeting at the university that involved municipal stakeholders, such as council members, social workers, social educators, teachers, psychologists, who were all chosen as spokespersons to initiate concrete actions to address the issues that the critical discussion revealed.

Data Analysis

The researchers used the software NVivo 9 to analyze the data (the group discussion verbatim transcription and comments on the participants’ photos). The analysis was based on the assumptions of grounded theory, which considers that theory emerges from data in an inductive way (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Researchers also conducted an analysis a posteriori of the pictures and identified some categories. The texts were categorized by two independent

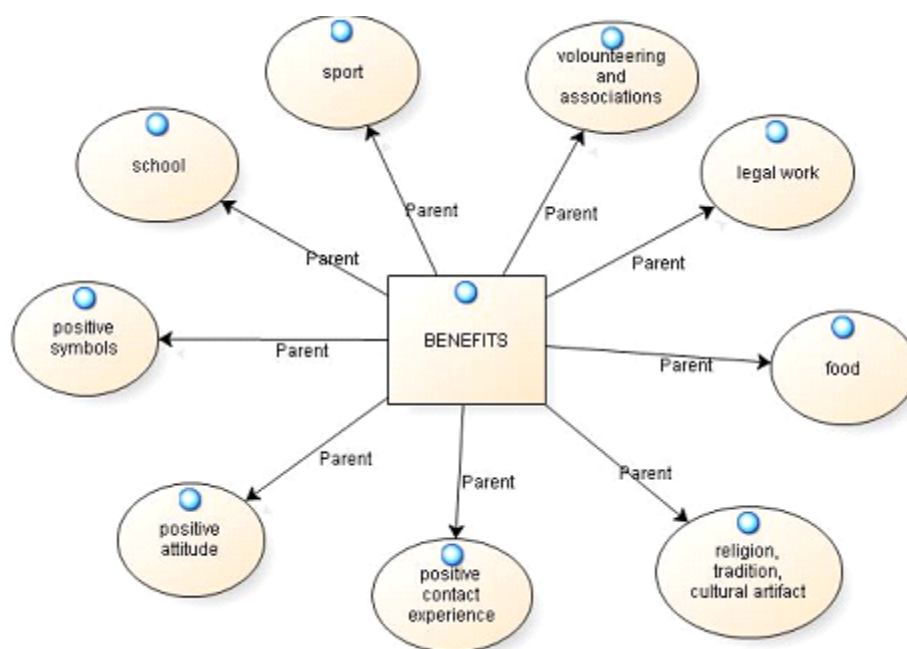
judges, who separately analyzed the material and then met to compare the individually identified categories, obtain common categories and analyze them. The research team categorized the participants' possible solutions for fostering intergroup integration, following Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979). Community psychology underlines the importance of the ecological perspective for explaining events (Francescato, Tomai, & Ghirelli, 2002). Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979) better fit the aims of this work because it underlines the importance of identifying the interconnections between different levels (microsystem, mesosystem, esosystem and macrosystem) and the circular relationship that exists between individual and environmental variables. A microsystem is a set of activities, roles and relationships in an arena or environment. Mesosystems refers to the relationships between environments, such as school, family and peers. Esosystems refers to situations in which the subject is not directly involved but is nonetheless affected. Macrosystems are the overall cultural environments into which other systems are incorporated; they are, thus, a complex of ideological representations produced by social institutions and culture. Within this approach the migration process is better understood using a linear approach to analyze the different domains and contexts in which this phenomenon can be explained.

Results

Benefits of Immigration

Participants discussed a number of issues, but the images and themes that most of the young adults during the group discussions, identified as benefits of immigration are presented in the following model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Model of the Benefits of Immigration



First, many Italian youth recognize school as a place where there is a possibility of meeting people from other cultures, getting to know them and their cultures better and

learning to live in a multicultural context (e.g., *“Almost half of the students I have seen come out of this school come from abroad. It’s nice to see how children, unlike adults, are able to live simply and naturally between peers of different ethnic groups.”* (Female, 19 years old).

Second, sport is seen by youth as an activity that leads to cooperation by breaking down differences (e.g., *“Through sport, entire ethnic groups have fought for equal rights and have fought racism. Even today, sport remains one of the best integration tools.”* (Male, 20 years old). Additionally, a category emerged called “volunteering and associations” in which the students collected images of intergroup contact experiences between Italians and immigrants in formal and informal contexts. Some participants spoke of associations where immigrants could find help in case of difficulties, although other youth observed that immigrants could also join these associations to help others and to better integrate themselves (e.g., *“Even the Public Service where I have volunteered for many years has in recent times, seen the arrival of young foreigners who have integrated with all in an exemplary manner. I like to think that it can continue like this.”* (Male, 20 years old). Furthermore, our participants stated that through the relationships with volunteers in the education context Italian and immigrant children should learn rights and duties (e.g., *“Group photo of children of different ethnic groups and very different stories, escorted by volunteers who teach respect for rights and duties using games and community life.”* (Male, 19 years old). Another category that was considered was “legal work,” which, for participants, was a resource for the majority group in the host society because foreigners are willing to do jobs that Italians will no longer do (e.g., *“This man is a dustman. He is proof that foreigners generally hold the most menial jobs that Italians no longer want to perform. Immigrants are more willing to work flexible hours and in poor working conditions and to become inserted into the informal economy.”* (Female, 19 years old). The workplace gives the opportunity to come into contact with distinctive ethnic groups of people and allows them to get to know one another (e.g., *“This picture makes me think about how intercultural integration can be a resource. It’s refreshing to see how, even in a work context, people of different ethnicities may overcome socio-cultural differences to support each other.”* (Female, 20 years old).

One more benefit that was identified was food, which allows people to get to know other cultures’ food practices (e.g., *“The Casbah has now become a gathering place for many young people in my city. In this place you can taste typical Arab and the various types of tea, moving closer to a culture different from ours.”* (Female, 21 years old). *“It’s really nice to be able to find tastes and flavors from all over the world in the same country. You can appreciate the ingenious art of preparing food and you can discover aspects of the same food you’d never even been able to imagine.”* (Female, 20 years old). Additionally, different religions and traditions were considered a benefit because they provide an opportunity to enrich the knowledge and the lives of the host nationals who have contact with them (*“Cultural integration is not just physical acceptance of those who are different from us but also about learning to appreciate their cultures and traditions.”* (Female, 22 years old). Many participants tell of positive contact experiences with immigrants that helped to reduce prejudice and enhance positive attitudes toward them (e.g., *“I was lucky to grow up in a group of friends in which cultural difference did not create any major problems. In fact, it has been considered a source of enrichment, and it reduced prejudices.”* (Female, 21 years old). Another category was “positive attitude” in which there were images about solidarity and reciprocity (e.g., *“the first photo that I wanted to bring to this issue aimed to represent the solidarity that can be established between people from different backgrounds. In this photo (a group of youth) the relationships’ simplicity struck me.”* (Female, 19 years old). Lastly, the “positive symbols” category included all pictures of inanimate objects, nature and situations that represented something about immigration and that the participants used as metaphors to express their thinking (e.g., *“Together is better! A soup of different legumes is*

better than one single legume soup... more colors, more flavors! Our society is the same!" Female, 20 years old).

In sum, it is possible to divide the benefits into two areas: daily life context and attitudes and behaviors related to knowledge and contact with relevant dimensions of different cultures.

The benefits of immigration were revealed from the analysis and discussion of the photos. Table 1 shows a few examples of pictures taken by participants along with their comments about the benefits of immigration.

Table 1. Examples of Pictures and Comments about the Benefits of Immigration



"Sport is one of the best allies of integration. When we practice a sport we use body language, that is universal. You can't play judo alone, in this case it is easier to appreciate difference. That's why, above all children, immediately notice that they need a partner, developing naturally an intercultural spirit".

Female, 19 years old.



"Adding a seat at table is always the best way to create ties".

Female, 20 years old.



"This girl's headdress is named a Hijab. Her veil's is no longer understood to be a symbol of female oppression, but a fashion garment that distinguishes cultures and lets people appreciate the beauty of Muslim people's traditions".

Female, 19 years old.

In summary the majority of the categories that were identified as a benefit of immigration were related to positive contact experiences that host people could have with immigrants. These help to break down differences, and they can improve host countries' intercultural knowledge and help native residents learn to live in a multicultural world. Moreover, immigrants are perceived as a helping Italian society.

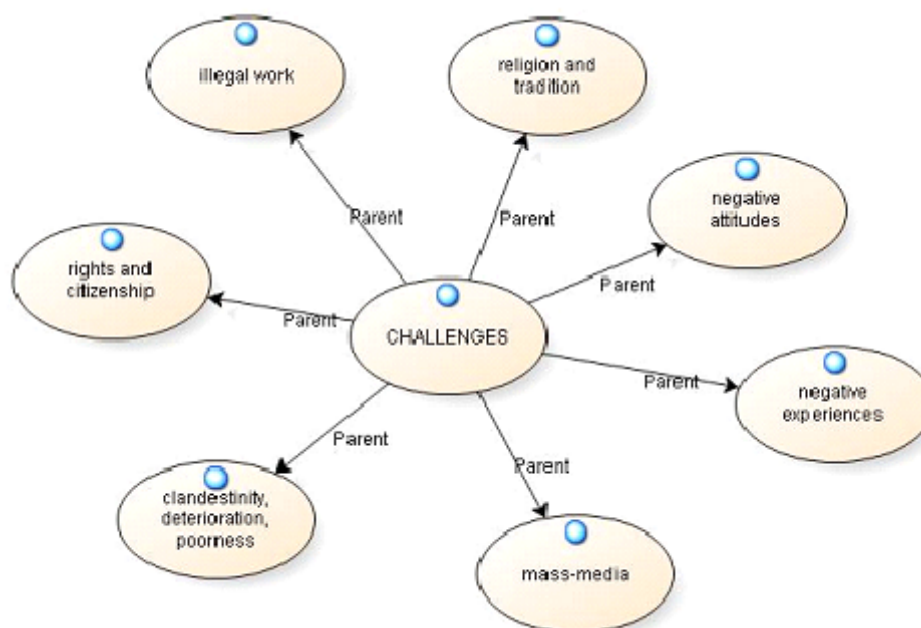
Challenges of Immigration

Participants also acknowledged the challenges of immigration (Figure 2). The most identified issue was "illegal work," which does not allow immigrants to live a dignified life (*"The negative side of immigration is that people do not always find work in the new country. Many people find themselves asking for money for food or working illegally"* (Female, 20 years). *"In the streets of the city there are prostitutes, who in most cases are immigrants. This raises the question of how the labor market is closed to those who come from abroad. Immigrants are forced to undertake work unpleasant and illegal work"* (Male, 19 years old). Moreover, a few of the participants affirmed that workers' knowledge of the host language is related to

integration because it affects their ability to understand simple safety instructions (e.g., “*Not knowing Italian language is a barrier to integration. The man in the photo is from Morocco, but he knows how to write and speak Italian, so he could acquire specific skills in the workplace*” Male, 21 years old; “*Where there is no dialogue there is no integration!*” (Female, 20 years old).

Illegal work is stressed by many participants as a problem of having to be clandestine because it is viewed as an unworthy and unsafe way to live life (“*I took this photo near the harbor, there are people who try to attach to trucks that are directed to Italy to climb on the ship illegally.*” (Female, 20 years). Participants underlined that unfortunately there are many foreign people who live in hidden poverty, conditions that no one deserves (“*Speaking about immigration challenges I think first and foremost a word: misery, this picture (a beggar), in my opinion, is an emblem.*” Female, 19 years old). Religion and tradition, according to our participants, can be both a benefit, as mentioned above, and also a challenge if it leads immigrants to become closed off to the host society. Participants indicated that foreign traditions and diverse religions are also seen as challenges, when they become a way to fuel prejudices between immigrants and natives (“*Sometimes I think that religion can be a source of conflict. My dad tells me that when he was working abroad a person stopped the bus that was carrying them to work because he had to pray. He delayed everyone!*” (Female, 20 years old).

Figure 2. Model of the Challenges of Immigration



A few participants reported examples of intergroup contact that confirmed the existing negative attitudes toward immigrants (e.g., “*I think that if anyone of us late at night sees a Moroccan take on the bus...something happens inside of him....a minimum of fear....or even during the day if you see gypsies on the bus you are afraid that they will steal your wallet.*” (Female, 20 years old).

The mass media is included in challenges because media often builds a negative image of immigrants, for example, stressing the idea that they are criminals (“*The media want us to see immigrants in a bad light, because they know that it is easy to generalize the*

negative behavior of some people to the whole group.” (Male, 20 years old). The last category was “rights and citizenship” in which the students included all civil liberties that immigrants should have in Italy such as having the right to vote, having the academic or professional qualification that they obtained in their countries of origin acknowledged, and having the right for the second generation born in Italy to have Italian nationality (e.g., *“I do not understand how a foreigner who comes here cannot be considered Italian, just for the color of their skin, because it does not change anything if he is born here. So it is absurd that it cannot decide who should represent.”*) (Female 23 years).

In Table 2 there are a few examples of the pictures taken by participants with their comments about challenges of immigration.

Table 2. Examples of Pictures and Comments about the Challenge of Immigration



“This man is trying to sell umbrellas to earn some money for his children. He lives every day hoping for a real integration and a stable and decent job”.

Female, 19 years old.



“This is a Senegalese man who begs passers-by, who are probably luckier and happier than him. His eyes ask for help, but are full of fear. I try to identify with him and I perceive anxiety and fear for living every day in clandestinity, without knowing what to do and where to go tomorrow.”

Female, 19 years old.



“There are immigrants who don't give up their own culture's customs and traditions. This increases integration difficulties due to prejudices against strangers maintaining their customs”.

Male, 19 years old.

In sum, participants identified as challenges of immigration all of the dangerous conditions, that no one should experience in life, such as poverty, living in hiding and illegal work. Participants stressed that immigrants should have more rights because they work and pay taxes in Italy and that, in particular, children born in Italy should be recognized as Italian citizens. The mass media is included in the challenges category because it contributes to creating negative opinions of immigrants, strengthening the host country's prejudices toward them, which accompany the negative experiences that some host country natives might have had with immigrants.

Solutions

The participants identified solutions (Table 3) that were re-categorized and analysed by the researches team using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model (1979). The solutions are placed in three of the levels proposed in the model: Microsystem, Esosystem and Macrosystem.

Table 3. Solutions Identified by Participants

MICROSYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School context as a place for culture exchanges • Contact between individuals • Talk to educators and experts of sector • Plan meetings and debate about multiculturalism
ESOSYSTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit museum and realities linked to migration • Raise awareness to knowledge • Promote intercultural event
MACROSISTEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax benefits to employers (to eliminate undeclared work) • Acknowledgment qualifications • Citizenship for second generations • Institutional representatives

For Microsystem, the most frequent solutions related to school, as a place of contact between cultures to educate others, as this participant says: *“We integrate immigrants who attend school, but we also transmit our culture, rarely we try to learn something from theirs”* (Female, 19 years old). Another girl said: *“I think that at school besides contact, we have to learn something from these people, trying to make them transmit a little bit of their culture. For example, for children I think of games and tales”* (Female, 19 years old). Second, contact between people is crucial as shown by this statement: *“Mutual involvement. Share the reference values. Therefore, do not just be open to a comparison, but also be able to enter the other's world. Take the role of the other”* (Male, 20 years old). These two were followed in order of significance by enhancing social support, organizing meetings with sector educators and experts and holding debates about integration. Participants also championed the importance of contact between people, because it reduces prejudice and gives the opportunity to enrich lives. A third recommended solution was to empower social support, care more about non-Italian natives and find ways to help immigrants understand Italian society. The youth advised that parents should talk to educators and experts on immigration to better understand the phenomenon and the importance of accepting multiculturalism and, accordingly, to pass this message on to their children; participants also considered it important to organize debates regarding intercultural matters.

At the Esosystem level, the students ranked as most important visiting museums and realities related to immigration to gain a deeper knowledge and awareness: *“Let's take a visit to an immigration museum: let's go where there are asylum seekers. I mean that we have to see these realities!”* (Female, 20 years old). In second place was increasing knowledge,

because prejudice generates from the unknown and promoting intercultural events to expose people to different cultures.

At the Macrosystem level, the issue of tax benefits for employers was viewed as imperative for eliminating undeclared work, as stressed by the following statement: *“More regulation for work. As we were saying before there are many undeclared workers, maybe just because no one wants to regularize these foreigners, just because high costs have forced the employers to make choices of which they aren’t proud. That’s why some facilitation from government should exist, tax facilitation to make sure that the immigrant workers’ regulation is not a drag on the company’s economy”* (Female, 19 years old). Second, participants recommended acknowledging qualifications, declaring: *“The story of this girl surprises me. In Ecuador she is a civil engineer, but in Italy she cleans houses because her degree isn’t acknowledged. If immigrants have degrees, it is fair to acknowledge them.”* (Male, 19 years old). Next, the issue of citizenship for the second generation, was considered essential: *“Citizenship for children born in Italy...if a person is born in Italy they have the right to be Italian.”* (Female, 21 years). Finally, participants highlighted the need for institutional representatives for the newcomers (e.g. *“These people work, pay taxes, they have the right to be represented...they should have the right to be involved in the social life.”* (Female, 19 years old).

Discussion

In this study participants had the opportunity to think about the factors that influenced their concepts of immigration. The sport and school contexts were identified by participants as benefits, as Mastrilli and colleagues (2013) also note. In fact, these contexts provide youth the opportunity to encounter different cultures. In addition Johansen and Le (2012) affirm that school can contribute to building the youth’s ideologies and behaviours. In line with Spaaij (2013), one of the most significant topics in sports organizations is differences (Cunningham, 2011; Cunningham & Fink, 2006). Regarding cultural differences, sport recognizes the importance of equality and cultural maintenance (Taylor & Toohey, 1998). It is one of the few social activities that exist in every culture and community in the world and that connects people (Eitzen & Sage, 2003). Many people play sports because they desire to be a part of a group and feel a sense of belonging (Allen, Drane, Byon, & Mohon, 2010). Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) based on Gordon’s assimilation model (1964), found that through participation in sport, immigrants should adopt the host nation’s values and behavior, because sporting activities expanded inter-group contacts and break-down barriers between immigrants, other ethnic minority members and natives. The study demonstrated that participation in traditional sports strengthened community ties and allowed immigrants to socialize with individuals who shared common cultures and experiences with them.

Another phenomenon that participants recognized as a benefit of immigration was volunteering. Integrating immigrants into new societies can be expedited through their participation in volunteer associations (Bloemraad, 2006; Eckstein, 2001; Halpern, 2005; Skocpol, 2003). Other studies confirm that integration is easiest for those who have many social relationships or resources (Hagan, 1998; Korinek, Entwisle, & Jampaklay, 2005), because they can find formal or informal support in these resources. As Andersen and Milligan (2011) suggest, immigrants not only become more integrated if they belong to associations, but they also have more opportunities to become members of associations as they become more integrated. There are clearly issues of immigration that can be read as benefits and challenges such as, for example, work and religion/traditions. Reyneri (2003) supports this study’s participants’ opinion that immigrants take jobs that the locals refuse. He explains that most of the jobless host nationals are educated youth, people with high

professional aspirations who can wait to find highly qualified and rewarding work. Thus, industries require foreign workers to fill jobs that native workers refuse. Work was also considered a challenge by the participants, because of immigrants' illegal and risky jobs. Orrenius and Zavodny (2009) confirms that immigrants work in more dangerous industries and occupations and that those who accept such work are usually poor, males with little education who do not speak the host language well. The ambivalence attributed by participants to religion is in line with literature (Gibson, 2008; Saroglou & Mathijssen, 2007) that recognize two possibilities: on one hand, religion seems to open a more complex identity and more integration and involvement in the host society; on the other hand, religion is a useful factor in developing a stronger sense of belonging to one's original ethnic culture, which could be an obstacle to integration into the new society. One more challenge according to participants was illegal immigration as a concept strictly related to smuggling and trafficking of goods and people and linked with organized crime and illicit economies, according to Väyrynen (2003). Participants' proposed possible solutions aimed to ensure the positive integration of immigrants. At the Microsystem and Esosystem levels, solutions mainly produced the themes of contact with people of different culture and of deeper knowledge of immigration and other cultures. Both of those are useful for reducing ethnic prejudice. According to the Theory of Contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), the perception of good interactions by host country natives leads to reduced ethnic prejudice and feelings of threat and increased empathy toward minorities. Concerning the deepening knowledge of what is different from one's native culture, as Stephan and Stephan (2000, p. 38) observe: "*If fear is the father of prejudice, ignorance is its grandfather,*" that is to say that the unknown frightens people and makes them feel threatened. At the Macrosystem level, the proposed solutions tended toward integrating immigrants at the socio-political level. Participants wanted that immigrants to acquire citizen's rights, because they are involved in Italian social life.

Although our findings highlight an integrative approach to the phenomenon of immigration, in Italy, there are politics and cultures that tend to be very opposed to migration.

As highlighted, cultural heterogeneity has become a structural element of Italian and European society that allows host community members and migrants to have daily contact. Immigrants represent the most fragile component of the population and are often represented by the mass media in terms of difficulty. Immigrants therefore may be perceived as having lower status within the wider comparison between social groups, which, in the literature, is associated with prejudices and stereotypes. In addition in the broader European context, ethnic and religious diversity are also increasing, and this diversity can contribute to intercultural dialogues and to integration; other specific contexts are so different that you cannot assume a generalization of the data from the present work. However, Photovoice, can be used in different contexts to allow people to reflect on and discuss migration and encourage people to actively identify specific solutions related to their contexts. In particular, as is highlighted in the literature, it is important to work with young adults because they will be the future generations, and, moreover, it is in this phase of life (the transition from adolescence to young adults) that people's prejudice decrease (Hoover and Fishbein, 1999; White et al., 2009) in correspondence with their more flexible and abstract thinking, their increased moral development and the influence of social relationships (Katz & Ksanskak, 1994; Kohlberg & Candee, 1984).

Conclusions

Photovoice offered host youth the opportunity to think about the phenomenon of immigration as it occurs in their own communities. In our study Italian youth identified

benefits and challenges of immigration and proposed possible solutions that would allow their communities to move toward more intercultural organization. During the poster session the young adults presented their proposed solutions to stakeholders who accepted them and considered them for future projects. This process helped participants to think more deeply about the main topics of immigration and integration. The participants proposed ideas for fostering the awareness among immigrants that they are not alone and that together, it is possible to attempt to build something good for their own society.

The present study underlines the importance of intergroup contact and common rules in life context such as like school and sport associations to foster integration because these can help to minimize the challenges of linguistic incomprehension through the use of a common language. The Photovoice technique permits natives to reflect about on other cultures and discuss the topic of migration and to deepen their knowledge of different points of view with respect to migration through the group discussion. These solutions demonstrated the youth's openness toward immigrants and their attitude toward intercultural integration. An interesting follow-up to this study would be to undertake it in different contexts to acquire more heterogeneous perspectives and to obtain a more global understanding about immigration and multiculturalism.

Limits and Applications

The limitations of the present work lie primarily in the sample: the participants were young adults who attended to a university course and were mainly female. Future research could include young adults in the work context and more heterogeneous gender, age and ethnic characteristics.

The specific data collection activities in this study began with discussions with the community of stakeholders of the ideas that emerged and possible intervention initiatives in the context of promoting empowerment (Prilleltensky & Arcidiacono, 2010; Rappaport, 1984), with the goal of active citizenship. Additional implications of this work could be relevant to other teachers of qualitative methods, who could take inspiration from this project to learn the Photovoice technique and apply it outside of the university context. This would allow more groups to reflect on issues that are important to their life contexts such as migration processes that are salient in both the Italian and European contexts.

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Author Note

Nadia Rania is an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Genoa, PhD in Research Methods in Human Sciences and Family Mediator. She teaches Qualitative Methods and Psychology of Groups and Community. Furthermore she is a member of the College PhD in Migration and Intercultural Processes. The main research topics in which she is currently involved are: use of qualitative methods (diaries, interviews, photovoice) in different groups and different contexts of research and family intra/intergroups relationships; immigration and acculturation processes; and well-being and quality of life in oncology. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: Nadia Rania at, Department of Educational Science, University of Genoa, C.so A. Podestà, 2, 16121, Genoa, Italy; Tel.: +39 010 20953747; Fax: +39 010 20953728; E-mail: nadia.rania@unige.it

Laura Migliorini is an Associate Professor of Social and Community Psychology at the University of Genoa, PhD in Research Methods in Psychology. She teaches Social Psychology and Community Psychology. Furthermore she is a member of the College PhD in Migration and Intercultural Processes. The main research topics in which she is currently involved are: support positive parenthood in social contexts at risk and immigration and acculturation processes.

Paola Cardinali is a psychologist and PhD in Migration and Intergroup Processes. She teaches Groups Psychology at the University of Genoa, where she is involved in many research projects about the topics of family relationships, immigration paths and acculturation processes, well-being and quality of life especially in childhood and adolescence.

Stefania Reborà is a psychologist and PhD student in Migration and Intercultural Processes. Her current themes of research are: parental ethnotheories, immigration and acculturation processes, photovoice, and qualitative methods.

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