

*The measurement of social integration among the pupils:  
school and outside friendships*

Giulia Rivellini, Catholic University of Milan  
Laura Terzera, Milan Bicocca University

**Extended Abstract**

**Background and aim**

The experience of the countries with a long history of migratory inflows indicates that obtaining high integration level is possible not so much in the first as in the second and later generations.

Given that, in Italy, the migratory phenomenon is a fairly recent event (the heaviest immigration flows have occurred in the past 20 years) a numerically considerable presence of the second generation is as much a “recent” event. Some exemplified data: resident foreign minors accounted for less than 3% of total resident minors in 2003 and increased to 6.6% in 2007; while 6000 children were born to foreign parents in 1992, these had risen to 51,000 in 2005; the minors joined parents living in Italy rose from c. 3,000 in the early 1980s to 40,000 in 2006. In addition to this trend also the characteristics of immigrant parents with children in Italy (the most relevant: generally young age and short duration of stay, Blangiardo and Farina, 2006) tell us that a photo of the foreign-origin’ minors hits an important subgroup of second generations.

In this contribution our attention is on Lombardy first-grade secondary (junior) school kids. A grade of school compulsory for everyone preceding the choice of senior school and a region (Lombardy) that has the highest foreign presence in Italy (between 1/5 and 1/4).

Taking into account this scenario, in this contribution we want to supply an empirical measurement of social integration by individualization of the ways along which the foreign origin pre-adolescents (kids aged 11 and more) live the socialization with peers, that is a fundamental aspect (the friendship) of the kind/level of integration.

On the one side, the knowledge of the existence and of the strength of the friendship with both the Italians and the foreigners shows the so-called “friendship strategy”; on the other, the social integration also depend on the Italian peer attitude.

Among the pre-adolescents the school is the privileged place where the friendships rise and grow up, but it isn’t the only place (i.e. the sporting places).

The individualization of social marginalization, ethnic isolation and pre-adolescents’ characteristics with these social profiles can be useful to understand if these situations are only transient (i.e. depend on the socialisation) or concerning a specific “type” of foreign origin kids that needs of integration school policies.

**Data and methods**

The source of data is represented by a regional (Lombardy) sample survey conducted in 2006<sup>1</sup> on the first-grade secondary schools with a foreign presence of higher than 10%. The total of interviews is over 17,000 (Gilardoni, 2008).

In this contribution our attention is on children with at least a parent coming from countries with high emigration levels (“CHEL”), that is, from those countries that make up more than 95% of Italian immigrants.

To analyse the “socialisation” we take into account different factors:

1. To have Italian and/or foreign friends
2. To see friends outside the school
3. To have friends within the class
4. Importance given to making friends with classmates
5. Reciprocity of classmates friendship
6. Popularity within the class
7. Involvement in a team (basketball, football, etc.).
8. Daily hours spent in front of TV/Playstation.

With respect to the first two points we built an indicator following the Berry (2001) perspective that shows the existence and the strength of the friendship with both the Italians and the foreigners, that is, the so-called “friendship strategy” (Paterno and Terzera, 2008). Four profiles arise:

- “integrated”, by which we mean they have both Italian and foreign friends (whom they also see outside school);
- “assimilated”, see solely Italian friends;
- “separates”, those who say they have prevalently foreign friends;
- “marginalised”, i.e., those who say they have few or no friends, either Italian or foreign.

Regarding the points 3, 5 and 6, the data on closed friendship networks collected asking pupils to indicate persons (belonging to the class) with whom they have a good friendship relation, allow us through the tool of social network analysis to detect what type of relations do they have with their classmates. We can therefore identify two specific traits in the existing relations:

- a. “expansiveness”, which expresses the level of “opening” towards classmates
- b. “popularity”, which expresses the relational “success” level of the generic “node” (pupil)

At the recent EPC in Barcelona we presented more detailed results regarding the network analysis (Rivellini G., Terzera L., 2008). In this study through the application of a cluster analysis we intend to detect the main friendship profiles and the kids’ characteristics with these kind of profiles.

## **Preliminary results**

Preliminary descriptive analyses on the above factors showed someone common features:

- a. strong correlation between the importance attributed to school friends (a factor linked to being placed in a lower class) and popularity/expansiveness: the more the pupil falls behind in school, the less importance he gives to making friends with their classmates. This result leads to better investigate the effect of Italian consolidated strategy of newcomer integration in its schools (a new foreign pupil is placed in a class or classes below that corresponding to their age);
- b. gender is a discriminating factor: the girls are the more isolated and result as less popular and expansive;

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<sup>1</sup> The survey, carried out by the Ismu (an autonomous and independent organization promoting studies, research and projects on multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, and focusing in particular on the phenomenon of international migrations) is part of the first national project on the children of immigrants living in Italy (national coordinator Prof. Dalla Zuanna, University of Padua).

- c. performance in school is another discriminating factor: those who do well academically, grow in both expansiveness and popularity;
- d. a key role is played by socialisation: the friendships grow and are consolidated the longer the kids spend in the host society. By this, we underscore that we do not mean an exclusion of friendships with the foreigners, but, to the contrary, an intensification of those with the Italians; in addition to this, the kids who fully socialize in Italy behave almost identically to the Italians regarding the popularity and expansiveness.

We will now make some brief observations on the macro-area of origin focusing on the network measures (Table 1).

Kids of Eastern European and Sub-Sahara African origin are the most expansive. Vice versa, the less expansive are, on the one side, the Asians (those experiencing greater relational difficulties also outside school) and, on the other, the Latin American-origin students. In terms of popularity (mainly lower than the levels of expansiveness regardless of origin), again, only the kids of sub-Sahara origin are successful in becoming popular among their classmates. On the other hand, the lowest levels of popularity were scored not only by the Latin American and the Asians, but also the North African origin pupils.

*Table 1- Expansiveness and popularity by Area of origin*

		Eastern Europe	Asia	North Africa	Sub-Sahara Africa	Latin America
Expansiveness	Low	27.2	51.2	20.5	25.0	50.7
	Medium	30.3	31.2	32.5	29.3	26.1
	High	31.9	17.5	28.0	34.8	23.2
Popularity	Low	48.7	62.9	62.4	47.8	56.5
	Medium	30.8	22.9	22.3	25.0	27.6
	High	20.5	14.2	15.3	27.2	15.9

Through the cluster analysis we intend to detect the critical factors in the social integration process for the pre-adolescents living in the most multicultural Italian region.

## References

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