New generations and intercultural integration
in a multi-ethnic society

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to analyze integration processes of the new generations of immigrant origin, identity dimensions of new generations, the social practises and intercultural integration in European Societies that are undergoing deep transformation because of the growth of their multiethnic and multicultural character. Particularly, I have investigated integration processes taking into consideration the ways of selective acculturation, that is to say, in reference to recent explicative models: transnational approach and intercultural perspective. Such a question is dealt with considering an empirical research carried out - on a sample of 1314 Italian and foreign preadolescents - in Abruzzo, a region in central Italy.

Keywords: Multi-ethnic society; intercultural integration; selective acculturation; social practises.

1. Introduction

In this study I take transnational approach (Beck, 2004; Waldinger, 2008). Such a perspective allowed me to overcome the linear and macro-social vision favouring a new method of analysis that takes into consideration the whole of bonds that exist on a social and cultural level outside the borders of National states. The action courses of the migrants are influenced by the relation, family and community networks, that give support but also tend to channel individual behaviour, in a continuous game of interaction between subjective motivation, family expectations and community relations. From a methodological point of view, the units analysed are the individuals and the social networks they can use. My objective was to:

- understand how these young immigrants articulate the relation between their family and cultural origins;
- observe how particular cultural and social practices are taken into possession and repurposed in the new social context.

This study takes also the intercultural perspective, that is based on the dynamic conception of culture (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004) and on socio-constructionist approach to the ethnic categories (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Ashmore et al., 2004). Such an approach allowed me to consider identity not as a fixed inalterable modality of self perception, but as a composite and fluid social product. My aim was to:

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E grasp the processes of negotiation between the cultures and traditions in new generations of immigrant and autochthones;
E grasp formation processes of identities, of belonging and/or multiple-belonging.

2. Identity and intercultural integration

In the current scientific sociological debate on migration processes, the theme of intercultural integration and selective acculturation becomes relevant. Such a theme is considered central also when considering the transformation of migration fluxes. As Sayad (1999) describes, the movement of single individuals becomes the movement of families, immigration “for work” becomes “populating immigration”. The migration of families or the reunion of family nucleus because rejoining produces a deep transformation of the local texture that they establish into: to immigrate is to immigrate with one’s own history, own traditions, own ways of living, feeling, acting and thinking, with one’s own language, religion as also all social, political, mental structures of one’s own culture. Immigration is therefore a cultural and political phenomenon other than economic. In this way a movement of people becomes a global fact, that is to say a fact that regards all people, it shows many stories, it allows cultures, languages, religions, different needs to be discovered, but also many difficulties in welcoming these differences (Dal Lago, 1999).

In the field of the contemporary debate the necessity to go further than the universalism integration and multiculturalism is necessary. Two perspectives appear: the transnational one and the intercultural one.

The transnational approach analyzes migrations as globalizing experiences from the bottom, as globalization of common people, of families and their webs of relations. In this perspective the immigrants are considered as social actors that, within the resources and the restrictions given to them from the contexts they operate, they elaborate their choices and projects, they define objectives and they try to achieve them (Waldinger, 2008; Ambrosini, 2008).

Sociological perspectives that are based on this concept are set in an intermediate space between macro-social interpretations and micro or individual explanations. The transnational model leads to redefining the concept of the relationship between hosting society and the maintenance of transnational bonds of immigrants. Migrations contribute in eroding traditional frontiers among languages, cultures, ethnic groups and states-nations. They challenge cultural traditions, national identities and political institutions (Castles, 2002; Vertovec, 2004).

In this sense, the transnational theory is linked to the perspective of intercultural integration. Such model goes in the direction of a negotial conception of the encounter of immigrants and natives, in a process of openness to diversity, confrontation and exchange (Benhabib, 2004). Interculturalism is set further than assimilationism and differentialism and considers the dialogue of different cultures and identities (Cesareo, 2004). Intercultural approach takes into consideration interaction, mixing and hybridisation between cultural communities. Interculturalism is also about addressing issues of cultural conflict or tension (religious customs and requirements, communitarianism, women’s rights, etc.) openly though public debate, with the involvement of all stakeholders. The intercultural approach offers a management model of cultural diversity suggesting a concept based on human dignity of each person (Council of Europe, 2008).

Intercultural approach is based on the dynamic conception of culture and on a multidimensional reading of the of ethnic-cultural identity. The intercultural perspective substitutes a static, ahistoric and asocial vision of cultures, a progressive, dynamic, situated and social conception that grasps the dialogue between different cultures.

- In the study I engaged a theorical and methodological socio-constructionist approach, that considers ethnic categories as social constructions belonging (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Ashmore et al., 2004).

3. Social practices and interculture: The Abruzzo case

3.1. Objectives of the empirical researches

The general objective of the empirical research was to analyze the experience of Italian and foreign preadolescents that live in a multiethnic context, with the aim to study the identity dimensions of new generations, social practices and intercultural relations. I have investigated these aspects in the field of the Abruzzo territory, a
region in central Italy, that is to say in a context that in the last decade has had a transformation in the migration flux from temporary immigrations to a populating immigration. As regards the sample, 1314 preadolescents attending middle school I interviewed: 881 Italians (corresponding to 67% of the sample), 317 non Italians (equal to 24% of the sample), 116 children of mixed couples (equal to 9% of the sample) (Contini, 2012; Contini & Maturo 2011). For the aims of the investigation I have taken the following variables: gender; family characteristics; national origin; age of immigration.

The particular objectives of my research were the followings.

**Objective 1.** Coleman (1991), Bourdieu (2001), Reynolds (2010) underline the importance of the family and the disposability of the whole of the relations possessed for the integration on the job market of their children. The features of the family are considered by Portes and Rumbaut (2006) previous factors that influence integration processes of the children of immigrants. The family structure is the starting point of every individual and is indicated by Portes as the fundamental element in favouring or not integration paths towards the top of young immigrant children. One of the elements through which Coleman (1988) suggests the operationalization of the concept of internal social capital is formed by the physical presence of the parents.

With reference to these study in my research I considered important to investigate the family composition of Italian and immigrant preadolescents.

**Objective 2.** Studies on the theme have highlighted the coexistence, in family relations, of different requests on behalf of the adolescents: on one hand those of freedom and independence, on the other that of being cared for, understood, respected, considered and welcomed children (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Zhou, 2005).

I intended to investigate the normative aspects involved in every day interactions within the family ambit. For this purpose the following questions I considered: the rules on going out, dress code, frequentable people; rules relating to domestic life conduction; parents’ interest to the children’s scholastic life; help given by parents with homework.

**Objective 3.** The transnational model (Beck, 2004; Waldinger, 2008) redefines the relationship between hosting society and new residents: it is not conceived as an opposition between integration in the hosting society and the maintenance of cultures of origin.

Considering this my objective was to:
- studying if and how these young immigrants articulate the complex relation between their family and cultural origins;
- observe if and how particular cultural and social practices - as language or religion, listening to music or following the country of origin’s traditions - are taken into possession and repurposed.

**Objective 4.** In reference to the works of Stephan and Stephan (2000) and Ashmore (et al., 2004), in my research I engaged a theoretical and methodological relativist and a socio-constructionist approach, that considers ethnic categories as social constructions, with the objective to investigate if and in which measure new generations develop processes of negotiation between the cultures and the traditions.

I also take the dynamic conception of culture (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004) with the aim to grasp formation processes of belonging and if new generations develop multiple-belonging.

Ashmore et al.(2004) have individuated seven dimensions that contribute at defining a conceptual and empiric/operative point of view of the collective identity: self categorization/self collocation; evaluation; social identification or an interdependence feeling; the importance of such belonging in the more general concept of the self; social rooting/cultural practices; content and meaning of ethnic identity. Self categorization is considered the core of social or collective ethnic identity. In literature ethnic self collocation has been detected through different approaches. In particular, such dimension has been defined through the following empirical indicators: categorization/definition of the self as a member of a particular group; perception of similarity/prototopicità and certainty regarding self categorization (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954; Hutnik, 1991). The dimension of social rooting refers above all to the relational space attended by the components of a group. Some attempts to operationalise the construct of social rooting/cultural practices are found in the research of Stryker and Serpe (1994), of Stephan and Stephan (2000), and of Phinney and Alipuria (1990).

With reference to these studies, in my research I have investigated the creation of feeling of National, European, cosmopolite or multiple belonging identification in preadolescents that make experiences in a plural society and school. Besides, I have operationalised the social rooting dimension noticing familiar practices and the maintenance
of the culture of origin. Such an instrument included items that detect on a temporal scale (from “never” to “often”): the frequency which preadolescents tend to speak the language, listen to music, follow the traditions of the country of origin; how often they attend places where their religion is practised; their first language and the competence in their mother tongue. Finally, to detect the maintenance of bonds with the community of compatriots, the foreigners have been asked to indicate if they return to the country of origin, if they attend a National or religious association (Contini, 2012a; Contini & Maturo, 2010a).

I have chosen to analyze a specific age group of preadolescence, because this age group is crucial moments for the formation of an individual and social identity (Besozzi, 2006). The process of creating an identity in foreign youth can be more complex than the one of young Italians, because foreign young people are confronted on different proposals: the one on the country of origin, the one on the welcoming country, the one elaborated by the migrating family and also the one the Italians consider typically of their ethnicity. Mancini (2006) highlights how the condition that seems adapt to describe multicultural societies of our globalized world is multiple belonging.

3.2. Family composition

Family is a fundamental existential ambit for preadolescents, because it provides the economic support necessary to their growth and it has an educational, social, regulative and ethical function. As regards the family composition, Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1980) underline that the presence of both parents is an advantage, in the measure that it allows to benefit more emotional stability and a major social and economic capital that can translate into a stronger parental control.

From the analysis of the data of my research it is noticeable that in general, families of Italian and foreign preadolescents interviewed are unite and stable and are characterized by the presence of both parents: most of the sample declares that they live with their mother (98%) and 90% lives with the father. On the contrary to what was supposed, even foreign families show solidity, nevertheless they deal with many difficulties due to the relational fractures and rejoining that migration implies. As regards the foreign component, in Abruzzo in recent years an increase of families and a stabilization process of the immigrant population has been registered, due to rejoining too. This tendency is confirmed by the data collected. Besides, considering nationality, almost 99% of Italians and students with a non Italian parent live with their mother and 95% of children of foreign origin (Fig. 1). The fathers register absence rates that even though they overcome the mothers, above all in the case of foreigners and children of mixed couples, are restricted: 93% of Italians live with their fathers, 85% of children of mixed couples and 83% of foreigners (Fig. 2).

![Figure 1](image1.jpg)

![Figure 2](image2.jpg)

Considering the macro area of provenience, it is noticeable that the major amount of mother absence (11%) is registered among preadolescents coming from African countries, among which there is a minor amount with father absence (9%). The closest familiar nucleus, that is to say characterized by the contemporary presence of the father
and the mother (97%), are the ones of preadolescents coming from Asian countries. The time spent in Italy plays a positive role compared to family stability: the percentages of father presence go from 82% among students that arrived after the age of six to 87% among those born in Italy; the percentages of presence of the mother go from 94% among the former to 97% among the latter.

3.3. Support and control parental

In family relations adolescents on one hand freedom and independence, on the other understood, respected and welcomed require. As regards young people of immigrant origin the support and parental control are a source that can favour integration processes upwards of the children (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993).

Taking into consideration the normative aspects involved in interactions within the family ambit, the following questions I asked the Italian and foreigners preadolescents: the rules on going out, dress code, frequentable people; rules relating to domestic life conduction; help given by parents with homework; parents’ interest to the children’s scholastic life.

From the answers given from the preadolescents almost half of the sample is under parent control “often” considering going out (53%), frequentable people (52%), domestic life conduction (54%) and about 70% of parents consider scholastic progress of their children. Furthermore, considering citizenship, there are differences within the subgroups: Italians, compared to foreigners, are mostly under parental control on going out, on associating and scholastic progress. The students with a non Italian parent are placed in an intermediate position compared to the other two groups, getting closer to the Italians in the case of controlling going out and friend associating; while in the case of cooperation in domestic work they overcome, even if slightly, the percentage of the Italians. Considering the belonging to gender, it is evident that girls are under more control from their parents compared to boys above all as regards associating people and places, nonetheless domestic life conduction. Males are more under control than girls when it comes to doing homework. There are no evident differences between boys and girls compared to the interest of parents regarding scholastic progress.

Literature underlines the incidence of family support on scholastic success and on formative and working decisions of young children. Particularly, the scholars remark on how the help received by preadolescents when doing homework - that can be intended as a form of internal family social capital (Bourdieu, 1980; Coleman, 1988) - and the parents’ interest on scholastic progress of the children, play a crucial role in raising chances to obtain better scholastic results and influences future education and job expectations of the children.

To confirm what is highlighted in literature, from the analysis of the data it is evident how students receive more help with homework and that have parents that are more interested in scholastic progress generally have better scholastic results. Specifically, students that have parent support with homework, are the ones that with a higher percentage declare to have “good or very good” scholastic performances (32% against 24% of ones who receive no help), they commit “more” in scholastic duty (26% compared to 15%), they have better scholastic results, and are more inclined ad attending a grammar school (50% against 35%) and to carry on with university (48% against 36%). As for the influence of the parents’ interest on scholastic progress of the children on formative expectations of the latter, from the data it is evident a main inclination of children whose parents “often” ask how school was to attend a grammar school (44%) and to continue with university (44%). The fact that parents “never” ask their child how school was significantly reduces the inclination to continue with a grammar school (20%) and even more it reduces the inclination to attend university (11%). The children of parents that are not interested in scholastic progress are oriented at a professional formation (40%) and less than one out of two thinks of going to university. As regards scholastic results, there is a main inclination of children whose parents “often” ask about their school day to not have a scholastic failure and to obtain excellent or very good scholastic results.

On a whole almost 60% of the students interviewed receives help when doing homework. About one third of boys and girls interviewed are helped by their parents, 10% by brothers and sisters and 10% by a classmate. Furthermore, there is a strong percentage gap between Italians and non Italians, in the sense that Italians receive more help than foreigners: 53% of the latter declared no one helps them, compared to 34% of Italians and 35% of mixed couples children. Besides, the Italians above all (36%) and the students with only one parent with non Italian origin (40%) receive help from the father or the mother, an amount that decreases to 18% among the foreigners.
There is a percentage gap between Italians and children of mixed couples and foreigners when considering the question on “how often do your parents ask you about your school day”: 77% of children of mixed couples and 75% of Italians answered “often”, while the percentage of foreigners that gave the same answer decreases to 58%. Therefore, mixed couplet or Italian parents are more interested to the scholastic progress compared to foreign parents (Fig. 3).

Furthermore, in parallel with studies on the theme (Buordieu, 2001; Kao, 2004), it is evident that the cultural level of the family significantly influences the parents’ interest on the scholastic life of the children: the amount of students that declare that their parents “often” ask about their school day decreases to 81% among children of parents with a degree to 73% among children of parents with a high school degree and e, still, to 63% among children with parents who attended only compulsory school (Fig. 4).

There is also a linear relation between education title of the parents and help received with homework, in the sense that children with parents with a low education level are the ones that mainly declared not to receive help from no one (45%) and only 19% of them is helped by their parents; among the latter also the higher percentage of boys that are helped by brothers and sisters (13%) is registered. While almost half of the children with parents with a university degree receives help from mother or father and only 4% from brothers or sisters.

3.4. Cultural practises among preadolescents and their families

The dimension of social rooting of the collective identity (Ashmore et al., 2004) refers the entity of relations and contacts that are structured inside or outside their own belonging group (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). I have operationalised this dimension investigating the maintenance of the culture of origin and familiar practices. In the analysis of cultural practices, different scholars have focused on the participation level of activities promoted by their own belonging group, on the interethnic attitudes and acculturation attitudes (Phinney, 1992; Cheryan & Monin, 2005). To analyze family practises, the maintenance of origin cultures and traditions and the maintenance of bonds with communities of nationals the following aspects I have considered: the first language; the competence in the mother tongue; the language spoken in the family; listening to music and the following of traditions of the country of origin; the attendance of places where their religion is practiced; the returning to the country of origin; the attending national, ethnic or religious association.

As regards the knowledge of the language of the country of the parents’ provenience, studies on the theme underline how the transmission of the language of origin shows a good network of family support (Hakuta, 1986;
Portes & Hao, 2002; Gaudet & Clément, 2005). The European Commission underlines how bilingualism and more
generally a selective acculturation that is respectful of the culture of origin can have positive effects on the
integration of the child, on self esteem and scholastic results (EriCarts, 2008; Commission of the European
Communities, 2008). The data collected in my research show that 84% of foreigners interviewed learnt as a child a
different language from Italian. Considering then the language spoken in the family, over half of the foreigners
(53%) speaks mainly a language that is different to Italian, but 30% equally speak Italian and another language (Fig.
5). As imaginable, the first language of almost the total of Italians is Italian. As regards the competence in the
mother tongue, a strong percentage of foreigners (about 70%) comprehends the mother tongue and can speak it very
well. The factor of the time spent in Italy influences the knowledge of the language of the country of origin of the
parents: 57% of foreigners born in Italy or that arrived before the age of six understand it “a lot” compared to 83%
of the ones who arrived after the age of seven; can speak it “a lot” 55% of the former compared to 80% of the latter;
the numbers of students born in Italy or that arrived before the age of six that can read (29%) and write (23%) well
in the parents’ language are restricted. Considering the macro area of provenience, there are differences in the
subgroups, in the sense that children coming from Asian countries compared to the preadolescents of other
nationalities speak with their family the mother tongue with a higher frequency and declare to have major
competences in the mother tongue (Contini & Maturo, 2010; 2010b).

Referring to the maintenance of the culture of origin and the bond with the country of origin creates a articulate
picture.

48% of foreigners “often” listens to music from the country of parents’ origin and 54% “often” follows traditions
and festivals typical of the country of origin, percentages very close to those detected among the Italians:
respectively 49% and 58% of these stated to listen “often” the music and follow traditions of their countries (Contini
& Maturo, 2011a). The children of mixed couples listen to music (“often” 32%) and follow the traditions (“often”
25%) of the country of origin of the non Italian parent with a lower frequency than foreigners (Fig. 6). 43% of
foreigners “often” follow also Italian traditions. As regards the item aimed at detecting the attendance of National
associations, 10% of foreigners answered “often”, 29% “sometimes”, 61% “never”. Dividing the total data for
macro area of provenience, it is evident that above all preadolescents coming from African countries “often” follow
traditions of the country of provenience of the family and to attend a National or religious association. The Asians
listen to music from the country of origin of the parents with a definite higher frequency (71% “often”) than the
Africans (51%) and, in a definite measure, than the eastern Europeans (38%).

As regards the attendance of places where their religion is practiced (Hirschman, 2004; Levitt, 2007), 51% of the
sample “often” attends places where their own religion is practised, 32% “sometimes” and 17% “never”.
Considering the citizenship, we can observe that above all Italian preadolescents “often” attend religious places
(50%), followed by children of mixed couples (50%) and foreigners 27%. To this consideration, many socio-
religious studies highlight how among young Italians during the period of preadolescence coincides with the
maximum involvement in Catholic Church activities and with the maximum attendance of religious rites.

Figure 5.
A strong percentage of foreigners (78%) goes back or has returned to the parents’ country of origin. Of these about 68% returns frequently - 24% returns to the country of origin many times during the year, 44% once a year -, 21% once every two years or even less and 11% just once. This is a factor can induce to consider a positive bond with the land of origins given by returning to the parents’ country of origin.

3.5. Identity and multiple belonging

The “new” immigrant youth presence is a factor that is transforming western society from the foundations and sets a series of crucial challenges for the re-definition of social life in the welcoming countries. The growth of a “new generation” no more ethnically homogeneous with the autochthonous population represents a factor of disorder of the assumptions that are at the basis of National identities of the receiving countries, attest that National identification is a process not necessarily associated with population homogeneity and shows that social cohesion needs to be built with aware efforts and far-sighted policies (Kymlicka, 1995; Bauman, 1998).

The challenge that the multiethnic society has to face is formed from the passage from a “traditional” concept of citizenship centred on the belonging to one “Nation-State” (Beck, 2004) to a pluralist idea and negotiated by a national belonging, in which socializing, prolonged residency and the will to participate in the citizenship agreement are important too. Such idea of national belonging can be the critical place of the elaboration, never concluded, of a national identity able to incorporate immigrant “new generations”, that grow up in multiethnic contexts (Ambrosini, 2008; Bloemraad, 2004). Also in the Green Paper (Commission of the European Communities, 2008) the importance of a common belonging feeling is highlighted.

As for the formation of a sense of National belonging or multi-belonging in preadolescents that make experiences in a plural society and school, the results of the investigation show an articulate picture. On the whole, over two thirds of the interviewed preadolescents has developed a National belonging feeling (70%), and a regional one too (66%). Naturally there are some differences between Italians and foreigners. About 81% of the Italians interviewed feels “Italian” and 79% feels “abruzzese”. However the amount of foreigners (37%) that have developed a belonging feeling towards the welcoming country is significant.

Besides, to confirm what emerged from the Cils investigation carried out by Portes in the schools in San Diego and Miami, with the increase of the time spent in the welcoming country, the inclination to develop a feeling of belonging to such country grows. The amount of immigrants that feels “Italian” goes from 26% among the students that arrived in Italy after six years of age to 56% among preadolescents born in the welcoming country or that arrived during the first years of their lives (Fig.6).

Relevant are also the data concerning the formation of over-national identities (Kymlicka, 1995; Council of Europe, 2008; Bloemraad, 2006). An interesting amount of students declared to feel a “European citizen” (39%) and “citizen of the world” (38%).

Citizenship is a factor that is able to influence the development of identity that is wider to a National one. The amount of immigrants that feels a “citizen of the world” (28%) is definitely lower than the Italians (41%). The foreigners that have developed a feeling of belonging to Europe are only 21% of the interviewed (compared with 45% of Italian): 29% among preadolescents coming from eastern European countries, 19% among the Africans, and decreasing, 5% among the Asians.

The period of permanency in the welcoming country plays a positive role in the creation of over-national identities: the amount of immigrants that has developed a cosmopolitan feeling goes from 23% of preadolescents arrived in Italy during schooling age to 37% among them that were born in Italy or arrived during the first years of their lives (Fig.7).
Also the parents’ qualification positively influences the formation in the children of multiple-belonging. In fact, it is noticeable a major inclination of children with parents with a medium or high level of education to develop a sense of multiple belonging and, particularly to develop ways of belonging that are wider than the National ones, like the European one (45% of children with parents with a high school degree and 46% of children with parents with a university degree declared to feel “European”, against 31% of children with parents with a middle school degree) and cosmopolitan (44% of children with parents with a high school degree and 43% of children with parents with a university degree declared to feel “citizen of the world”, against 31% of children with parents with a middle school degree).

The creation of a European sense of belonging is considered within the matter of a European identity. The identity of Europe is still being created and the founding values of Europe are not visible in daily life yet (De Wenden, 2001).

4. Conclusive consideration

These From the analysis of preadolescents experience that live in a context of progressive consolidation of a pluri-cultural scholastic and social reality, an articulate picture is evident. New generations build synthesis composite among cultural elements deriving from family traditions, communitarian belonging, and typical values of the welcoming context. Integration imply different articulations among individual dimension and the collective one, between belongings that recall ethnic or religious bonds and behaviours directed to the fruition of the opportunity offered by the hosting society. In such vision integration does not implicate necessarily opposition between referring to ascribed cultural elements and the acquisition of competences and abilities functional to social integration.

The results of the research confirm that ethnic-cultural identities constitute the result of a process of “negotiation” of meanings and values that take place within specific psychological, cultural and social conditions in which it happens. Generally, the current debate has matured the awareness that social identity and belonging take place in specific contexts through different dimensions in comparison: territorial, cultural, religious, national, over-national. Individual and social identity is considered not as something compact, fixed, unchangeable and definite once forever, but as a composite, fluid, continuously and repeatedly built, developed, changed, protected and preserved product during life through different “negotiations” of identities that take place in different contexts and different social relations (Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Ashmore et al., 2004).

In such a scenery the possibility to re-found a living together in the vision of respect and taking on responsibilities on behalf of singles, groups, and referring communities and institutions is prospected. According
to the definition of the Council of Europe (2008, p. 11) social cohesion «denotes the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation». The European context underlines the fact that linguistic, cultural, ethnic and religious diversity can be a resource for the intercultural dialogue and cohesion in plural societies (Nesse Network, 2008; EriCarts, 2008). In a context in which the borders and cultural distinctions are more fluid there is the possibility to organize one’s life and the living together in a pluricultural and multiethnic framework (Beck, 2004). New generations become the “places” where to form new codes, forms of action and identification that anticipate more general tendencies towards elaboration of new forms of social inclusion and new ideas of citizenship (Esser, 2004; 2010).

Finally, the analysis of the data show that new generations, that grow in multiethnic contexts, have mixed cultural traits and plural and composite identities. These results of the research demonstrate that to go beyond binary categories is an important point of the analysis of the current period, marked by an extreme closeness of different cultures. Gans (1962), considering the fact that traditionally migration sociologists refer to two currents - assimilazionism and multiculturalism - considered opposed, highlights that any kind of polarization damages the research and is not functional to the comprehension of transformation processes of contemporary societies, linked to globalization processes and migration fluxes.

References


