When I Hear the Word Migrant... Research on Images and Stereotypes with Sentence Completion Technique

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Abstract

In 2016 I conducted a study on the images of migrants, interviewing 100 people living in a small Sicilian town. We used a tool that I created *ad hoc*, inspired by the Sentence Completion Test. Subjects were asked to complete 44 incomplete sentences. Here are some examples: *About immigrants I like...*, *The ethnic groups I know are...*, *Immigrants think that we Italians are, Romanian women...*, etc.

The analysis can be carried out with both quantitative procedures– classifying the completions of each sentence – both qualitative, like in this investigation, interpreting protocol by protocol the completions of each subject also in the light of the same subject's completions of the other sentences. The results obtained encourage us to consider the instrument used as valid: for the most part it does not offer pre-established meanings and it seems effective in detecting deeply internalized values.

Two of the problems that have emerged regard the alarm about the danger of dissolving our culture and traditions, and the unpleasant impression of stubborn attitudes of isolation and the reluctance of foreigners to integrate in the context of acceptance.

Regarding attitudes towards foreign women, it has emerged that Romanian women *appear* enterprising, strong, free, and 'breadwinners' – they deviate from the classic female model and therefore cause concern; unlike Muslim women, who *are considered to be* weak and submissive.

As for the words to be used, what emerged suggests the term 'migrant' rather than 'immigrant' should be used because the former promotes empathy and identification. Moreover, the term 'foreigner' should be preferred to 'non-EU national' because the latter probably arouses a greater sense of foreignness and distance and therefore is a little more threatening.

Keywords: images of migrants, ethnicity and gender, Sentence Completion Test.

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1. Introduction

The Polish Peasant in Europe and America triggered the reflection of sociologists on the social figure of the foreigner. Since then, the role attributed to the individual's interpretation of the situation in which he or she finds him or herself, which derives in large part to their cultural background, has become crucial. For Simmel (1908) the characteristic trait of the foreigner is ambivalence, belonging to two worlds, which arouses curiosity and anxiety at the same time. In *Studies on antagonism against strangers*, published in 1931, Znaniecki highlights the fact that the perception of extraneousness is based not so much on biological diversity but on values, and it is the principle on which antagonism and negative behavior towards foreigners are based.

Regarding the relationship between the established and outsiders, according to Elias and Scotson (1994[1965]) the integrated group considers outsiders to be anomic, unreliable, without rules and values, and a threatening Other able to destabilize their own identification system and status. On the other hand, 'the difficulties of the relationship between foreigners and locals are linked to the way in which both define reality' (Perrotta, 2000): our attitudes are linked to our definitions of the situation. Symbolic interactionists highlight the fact that the same object can be defined differently by different groups, different people, and even by the same person at different times. The way we place ourselves towards the other is connected to the way we define him/her (Perrotta 2004).

Also in Italy, for some time the migration flows have involved instances of culture clash, similar to those that occurred in the United States in the first decades of the last century, for example.

This condition was also experienced directly in some small communities as their region was one of the sites of implementation of the *Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees*[1], introduced in 2002 with specific legislation. Therefore, in some towns, families of foreigners were settled, and presumably residents had contact– sometimes frequent– with them, whether they liked it or not. In the town that is the subject of this investigation, in addition to these families, there was also a certain number of women from Eastern Europe– mainly Romania– employed mostly as caregivers. Therefore, the members of this community had a certain familiarity with the migration phenomenon, that they did not only see through the media.

With Aurelia Chirminisi, one of my students from Kore University of Enna, who lives in one of these municipalities– a small Sicilian town of about

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[1]This included towns that had applied for access to specific ministerial funding aimed at implementing integration projects and spreading a culture of acceptance.

3,000 inhabitants– we agreed as a thesis topic a study on images of migrants, stereotypes and attitudes of the population of a small center regarding political refugees and the immigration phenomenon in general.

2.   Technique, participants, conducting interviews

Following my line of research on non-traditional qualitative techniques to detect social values, for the investigation we used a tool that I created *ad hoc*, inspired by a projective psychological test[2] but used here in a different way from the usual practice in clinical psychology, in which projective tests are used above all for the study of personality[3] and possible psychic pathologies. These tools have also been applied in socio-anthropological research, albeit sporadically. I have listed some authors who have used them to study the relationships between culture and personality.

Hallowell (1955) is one of the anthropologists who was most interested in the use of projective techniques in cross-cultural research. In one of these he used the Rorschach test to study the acculturation processes of the Indians in North America, and he stressed that the information gathered coincided with the impressions taken from participant observation. Even Honigmann (1949), who used 28 Rorschach protocols in his research on the Indian Kaska personality, reported that the results coincided with those from other sources. Cora Du Bois (1944) associated the Rorschach test with a word association test, with emotionally rich terms taken from local cultures, to study the personality of the inhabitants of the Indonesian island of Alor. W. Henry (1947) carried out some research on Hopi and Navaho children with a series of techniques including T.A.T. (Thematic Apperception Test), in a version adapted to the culture studied and using a modified analysis scheme compared to the original one. Caudill (1952) applied the T.A.T. to the study of the relationships between cultural change and psychological change, participating in some research on individuals of Japanese origin who lived in Chicago. With the same test, in the

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[2] On psychological tests, and projective techniques in particular, see Anastasi (1954/2002), Lis (1998), Granieri (1998), Boncori (2006), Di Nuovo (2008).

[3] The term 'projection' was introduced by Freud to illustrate one of the unconscious defense mechanisms, which consists in attributing feelings and qualities to others, or in any case to external reality. According to Freud, in the perception and organization of environmental stimuli, individuals are guided by needs, motivations, feelings and their cognitive structure. This process is activated in a completely involuntary way without any awareness (Frank 1948). The assumption of projective tests, therefore, is that the subject projects his own cognitive and emotional experience, linked to his family, socio-cultural, historical-political, ethnic affiliations, in figures, sentences, and drawings, characterized by a certain ambiguity and open to multiple interpretations.

famous study conducted in a town with a rural economy in the south of Italy, Banfield identified some cultural traits of that community, such as 'amoral familism' (1958). Grasso (1964) used Rorschach, T.A.T. and Rosenzweig's frustration test to study a group of 31 southern Italian young men who emigrated to America. Herbert and collaborators (1990) used the Miale-Holsoppe Sentence Completion Test in a cross-cultural study on a group of 99 students between 17 and 23 years of age, including 39 Americans and 60 Brazilians.

These scholars believed that projective techniques enrich anthropological observation with information, undetectable by traditional techniques, which reflect the culture of the individuals studied and allow us to understand their values and prejudices.

In sociology, Bruschi (1996) counts projective tests among the 'indirect reactive techniques', constructed in such a way that the purpose of certain stimuli is not clear to the subject and therefore he is free to say (write, draw) what he thinks without implementing defense mechanisms.

It also seems to me that, from the point of view of qualitative research, the methodological advantage of a judicious use of these techniques is that of being able to gather 'thick' (Geertz, 1973) information and observations, in a reasonably short time on a considerable number of subjects, definitely greater than that attainable, in the same period of time, with in-depth interviews or with other traditional techniques of this approach.

For this study I was particularly inspired by the Sentence Completion Test, which is reported in several versions in the psychological and psychodiagnostic literature[4].

It comprises a series of incomplete sentences that the interviewee must complete, and 'tends to cause the subject to become aware of what is still obscure and hidden' (Riva 1989). Although in different forms, it was devised by the various authors in such a way as to activate the identification– in addition to the projection– and to this end, the sentences are often constructed in such a way that the individual can feel a certain familiarity with the situations presented and therefore recognize himself. The proposed sentences are of two types: some tend to be 'projective' and others tend to be 'personal'.

In those of the first type we refer to the behaviors, attitudes and actions of others, and third person pronoun or personal names are used; they aim to stimulate identification with the human figures mentioned. In the second type

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[4]Sentence Completion Test by Murray and MacKinnon (Stein, 1947); Sentence Completion Test, designed by Sacks and collaborators in the 1950s (Sacks and Levy in Abt and Bellak, 1950); Miale-Holsoppe Sentence Completion Test (Holsoppe, Miale 1950); Washington University Sentence Completion Test (Loevinger, 1979).

of sentences we use the personal pronoun 'I' (or it is tacit), which should induce the subject to express his or her personal opinion on the human figures mentioned. In the original structure of the test, we aim to explore various areas of the personality, partially coinciding in the different versions: attitudes towards family, children, past, future, impulses, internal states, objectives, superiors, subordinates, friends and acquaintances, colleagues, life ideals, sex, affective relationships, feelings of guilt, authority, morality, success, work, etc.

The tool that I built specifically for this work consists of 44 sentences left pending, both tendentially 'projective'[5] and 'personal'[6]. In order to explore the conditions that give greater effectiveness to the technique, I divided the list into two lists of 22 sentences each: the first list (A) was given to the first half of the subjects in written form, and the second (B) in oral form; the second half of the group were asked to complete the sentences of the first list (A) orally, and to complete the sentences of the second list (B) in writing .

Most phrases cover aspects related to the topic mentioned. To allow a more penetrating and articulated interpretation, protocol by protocol, I included other sentences concerning: 'significant others' (family, friends), 'generalized other'[7] (people, person), the conception of oneself, desires and fears.

The interviews were carried out in the months of April and May 2016 to a group of one hundred residents in the town considered, divided by sex and age: twenty-five young men (from 18 to 28 years) and twenty-five older men (between 45 and 55 years); the subdivision for the fifty women was identical. We also tried to diversify the group by interviewing people with different educational qualifications (middle school diploma, high school diploma, degree) and different employment status (employed, student, housewife, unemployed).

The interviewer introduced herself roughly like this: 'I am a university student. I am asking you to participate in my graduation thesis work because I am studying how a kind of game is accepted. In this game, short incomplete sentences on some themes are presented. Here I have two lists and I ask you to complete these short sentences'. The instructions regarding the written form were[8]: 'In this list there are 22 incomplete sentences. Read them one at a time

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[5]For example: *On the bus next to Francesca sits an immigrant, she ...; Fatima wears a burka for ...; Immigrants think that we Italians are ...; People don't trust ...; On the street Paolo asks for help, the people ...; My friends think about me ...; At the bar Mohamed feels bad, people ...; At work one of my colleagues is Arab, the other colleagues ...; A person feels insecure ...*

[6] Some sentences: *For me it is important ...; From a friend I expect ...; What I don't like about immigrants ...; My greatest wish is ...; When I hear the word terrorism, I think ...; Immigrants should ...; My family…; In my country there are political refugees, I ...; If I fall in love with an immigrant ...*

[7]See Mead (1934).

[8]Some points of the instructions are taken from those prescribed in the original test.

and complete them by writing on the dots the first idea that comes to mind, spontaneously. Please go as fast as you can. If you really cannot complete a sentence, make a sign next to it and come back later. For some sentences you may think you can complete them with a single word, and for others, instead, you will think it takes a short sentence rather than a single word. I prefer a short sentence but if what comes to your mind is just a word, it's okay anyway. Please be as spontaneous as possible and do not dwell too long on each sentence'. The instructions regarding the oral form were: 'In this list there are 22 incomplete sentences. Now I will read them one by one and you will complete them verbally with the first idea that comes to mind, as quickly as you can and spontaneously. Please do not spend too much time thinking'. The participants were informed that the interview would also be recorded to avoid spending too much time on transcription.

For both forms: 'Obviously there are no correct or wrong completions, there is no possibility of making mistakes: every completion is fine because it is useful to understand if this sort of game is a fast and not unpleasant way to understand some ideas of people on various subjects. For example, you will see that there are phrases concerning the behavior of others or your aspirations and more'.

Some sociographic properties were noted for each subject: age, sex, educational qualification, working status, as well as date, start time and end time of both the lists provided in writing and the one administered orally. Before saying goodbye, a brief discussion took place on these points: how they felt about the experience, if the interviewee found it pleasant or annoying; his/her opinion on the sentences, on the different forms of presentation— written and oral; his/her preference for one of the two, if any, and the reason; if there was any particular phrase that had struck him or her. Finally, Chirminisi reported each subject's spontaneous comments and noted her impressions and observations on the mood, posture, and any non-verbal expressions of the interviewees. Obviously, this part of the interviewer's work was precious for the interpretation of the completed forms.

The analysis can be carried out with both quantitative procedures– classifying the completions of each sentence (which thus becomes a variable), and counting the frequencies and identifying the possible relationships between the variables–both qualitative, interpreting protocol by protocol the completions of each subject also in the light of the same subject's completions of the other sentences.

3. Results

As just mentioned, following a qualitative approach it is appropriate to interpret each single protocol in its entirety, comparing some or possibly all sentences, and simultaneously trying to identify features common to several subjects, taking into account the sex, age and qualification.

Since the sentences refer to different social objects and to more areas of meaning, and the material collected is rather substantial (100 protocols with 44 sentences each), there can be multiple criteria for analysis and the values investigated.

For this study I have chosen to articulate the presentation of the results in this way: *Some recurring themes, Images of foreign women, Apparent inconsistencies in the protocols, Reactions to some terms, Projective sentences and personal sentences*. In any case, there is no doubt that, using the same material, which is quite considerable, there can also be other, equally fruitful, lines of analysis.

3.1 Some recurring themes

a) In completing some sentences, the assumption that immigrants do not respect laws and/or commit crimes is quite frequent, without marked differences in gender and age. Here are some examples regarding the phrase *Immigrants should not* ...: 'steal', 'act like delinquents', 'kill', 'do bad things like killing and stealing as you hear on TV', 'do bad things when they come in our country', 'be violent'. Furthermore, some of the protocols reveal the perception that the majority of immigrants are Muslim and that there is a link between them and terrorism.

Often, even if no violent and/or illegal actions are attributed to them, bad behavior is reported: 'behave badly', 'take refuge in alcohol and then do bad things', 'take advantage of the goodness of the Italians', 'are ball-breakers', 'do their own thing', 'ask too much'. For the sentence *Most migrants…* people wrote 'are arrogant', 'behave ungratefully'. The sentence *Immigrants should* ... was completed with 'behave well', and the sentence *When I hear the word migrant* ... was completed with 'I get nervous', and so on.

Finally, several subjects still see them as a problem: *Immigrants should not* ... 'be in Italy', 'stay in reception centers', and the like.

b) However, it seems that the greatest and by far the most widespread concern due to the presence of foreigners in the territory is the danger of dissolving our culture and traditions. The imposition of the traditions, culture and lifestyle of immigrants is perceived as a strong threat and this alarm is clear and can be perceived in almost all protocols, as well as in the

spontaneous comments reported by the interviewer. It is most strongly felt by older men, then by young women, followed by young men and, curiously, lastly by older women.

In this respect, the presence of foreigners is disturbing even for those who have a very open attitude towards them and/or have an educational qualification higher than a secondary school diploma, like a 45-year-old man who likes to 'see the immigrants smile', tries to help refugees, and completes the phrase *I don't like people…* with 'ignorant, with prejudices', and completes other sentences in a similar vein; however, what he does not like about immigrants is 'their way of not getting used to us, they should adapt to our culture and be approachable'. A 27-year-old graduate mentions 'their tendency to impose' and claims that they should not 'push their culture'; similarly, a 45-year-old graduate, although showing herself to be very welcoming, states that they should not 'impose their habits'.

There are many completions that testify the strong fear of losing their identity. Here are some other examples: a 55-year-old man with a middle school certificate likes immigrants 'that respect our tradition'; another man of the same age would tolerate immigrants and political refugees if they 'accept our rules'. A 45-year-old with a high school diploma is not in favor of mixed marriages 'because of different cultures'. A 25-year-old with a high school diploma, who is fully in favor of welcoming immigrants, does not like the fact 'that they must impose things of their culture'; for another 25-year-old girl with a high school diploma in classical studies, most migrants 'do not respect the customs of others'. Several interviewees of the same generation express the same thought. The terms and expressions differ but the meaning is similar: 'habits', 'culture', 'our religion', 'our laws', 'wife and oxen from your own country', and so on. Even for an avowedly anti-racist young man, *Immigrants should not...* 'impose their thinking', 'insist on their customs'.

c) Comparing two ethnic groups mentioned in the sentences—Moroccan and Arabic[9]— there is a marked greater mistrust towards the latter, who have often been described as violent, fanatical, and arrogant, probably because the image transmitted by the media is both that of perpetrators of terrorist attacks and oppressors of women. As Chirminisi notes, it is possible that the Moroccans ('good people', 'melt my heart', 'good', 'people like us'), do not arouse this widespread aversion as they are considered weak subjects

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[9]The phrases proposed are: *The Moroccans ...; Most Arabs ...; At work one of my colleagues is Arab, the other colleagues ...; When people see an Arab ...*

due to their prevalent activity of street vendors, mentioned by several people in spontaneous comments.

And above all, Arabs are thought to desire to impose their own culture, perhaps resulting in a presumed strong ethnic identity: 'They keep a lot of their traditions, their religion', writes a 54-year-old man with a professional qualification.

d) Furthermore it emerged that above all people who show a propensity to acceptance (mostly women), but also others who are openly hostile, express specific criticism of the behavior of foreigners and immigrants in particular: 'they create separate communities' complains a 28-year-old female graduate who also appears to be entirely in favor of integration; 'They give themselves airs and graces' writes a 51-year-old woman with a middle school certificate; others do not like the fact that 'they always keep to themselves', 'they do not integrate well', or 'their way of labeling our uses and customs'. Here are some more comments about migrants: they should 'be approachable', 'be more sociable', 'collaborate with locals', 'integrate better', 'settle down in the place where they go', 'make themselves known', 'not isolate themselves' *Most of the migrants* ... 'maybe always keep to themselves'. A 27-year-old with a high school diploma states that political refugees 'are presumptuous people, they do not greet'; a 45-year-old with high school diploma defines a non-EU person as 'a person to be integrated' and writes that immigrants should 'adapt to the surrounding environment'.

e) Unexpectedly, among the participants in our research, the fear that immigrants take work away from Italians does not appear at all. Indeed, more subjects, both men and women, say: 'they should work like we do!' or 'I don't like it that they don't work!'.

There are very few exceptions: for an 18-year-old who attends high school, immigrants 'increase the unemployment of Italians'. A 40-year-old with a high school diploma completes a sentence concerning political refugees with 'Italians first'. The completions of three young women are similar: *Immigrants come to Italy...*'to steal work from us', and suchlike.

It is likely that one of the reasons why there was not much concern about the subject of stealing jobs, that seems very widespread among Italians nowadays, is that when the research was carried out in 2016, the political propaganda centering on 'Italians first' and the danger of immigrants stealing jobs was not as relentless as it became later on in the first Conte government–which started in 2018–with the Interior Minister Matteo Salvini, political leader of the League.

f) In general, it seems that the more educated subjects show greater tolerance, but with several exceptions.

A higher level of education, however, seems to at least foster critical thinking. For example, the protocols of two men aged 53 and 47 and a 50-year-old woman, all graduates and inclined to hospitality, raise this consideration because, much more than in others, there appear adverbs– of frequency, quantity, and cogency– that avoid absolutizing of judgments and that confer indeterminateness: they therefore appear symptomatic of a thought that is neither dogmatic nor prejudicial. Here are some examples taken from their protocols: people 'often' ignore a non-EU boy who asks for help and 'sometimes' ignore Paolo (an Italian boy) asking for help; immigrants 'sometimes' do not trust us; they 'sometimes' do not like the demands of immigrants; Romanian women are 'often' caregivers and Muslim women are 'often'– and for another interviewee 'somewhat'– submissive; mixed marriages are 'more' difficult; when people see an Arab they 'probably' get restless; most Arabs are not 'necessarily' Muslim; they do not like it that 'some' immigrants appear to be ungrateful; the Moroccans are 'more sincere than others'; 'Not all Arabs are terrorists'.

g) Finally, it seems that the distrust of foreigners is rather associated with a certain familism. The tendency to familism of some is derived from certain completions to sentences. *For me it is important...* ('my family', 'family comes first', 'family, friends, work', etc.) and *My family...* 'The maximum', 'the most sacred thing', 'perfect', 'special', 'it's all', etc.).

3.2 Images of foreign women

Regarding attitudes towards foreign women[10], it has emerged that several subjects– especially older women– show feelings of more or less ill-concealed aversion towards Romanian women. Conversely, positive or neutral feelings largely prevail with regard to Muslim women, seen by many as weak, submissive, victims of their men, forced to dress according to tradition, in a manner consistent with the image transmitted by the mass media. Here are some completions made by older adult women: Romanian women are 'almost all speculators', 'manipulators', 'I don't like them', 'hypocritical', 'not all are promiscuous'; for the same interviewees, correspondingly, the Muslims are: 'obedient and submissive', 'simple women', 'good women', 'reserved', 'somewhat submissive'.

These are the less harsh comments made by some young women about Romanian women: 'they live better than Italian women', 'they dress eccentrically', 'they are a bit peculiar', 'both bad and good', 'I don't like them' ;

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[10]The phrases concerning this subject are specifically *Romanian women ... and Muslim women ...*

and, in the same order, regarding Muslim women: 'without rights', 'they have no freedom', 'they are afraid of their husbands', 'good people', 'they are like us'.

Older men have also shown more opposing feelings regarding the two categories of foreign women than their younger counterparts. Here are some of their completions: Romanian women 'are unreliable', 'should return to Romania', 'are hypocritical', 'only look at their own interests'; Muslim women 'are victims', 'must change their religion', 'are reserved people', 'have a different mentality'.

The greater hostility of autochthonous women– in particular older women– towards Romanian women can be interpreted in a competitive perspective, as is known to be internalized by a large part of the female gender: in fact, quite a lot of the expressions used are 'steal husbands', 'manipulative', 'unreliable', 'not very serious'. Following this line of interpretation, Muslim women, on the other hand, would not constitute a danger.

However, considering the fact that several men also criticize them, it is possible that this malevolence is also linked to the fact that different ethnicities and backgrounds (identified with the most professed religion) refer to different stereotypes. Romanian women *appear* enterprising, strong, free, breadwinners, they deviate from the classic female model[11] and therefore cause concern; unlike Muslim women, who *are considered to be* weak and submissive.

Moreover, this concept has been criticized, for example, by the Moroccan sociologist Fatema Mernissi (2000), who rejects some clichés related to Muslim women, stating that even Western women can be called victims because they live with the worry of beauty and eternal youth to please men. In her opinion, Muslim women, on the other hand, do not have such exaggerated concerns because Islamic men consider intelligence and culture to be seductive, whereas in the West these prerogatives, for the most part, mortify femininity (see Fobert Veutro, 2010).

From a more penetrating analysis of the protocols two other aspects can emerge that I report and illustrate below.

It seems that some men feel a certain closeness and empathy with Romanian women, and instead distance and extraneousness with Muslim women; and that the outward appearance (the 'front': Goffman, 1959), as already revealed by the completions presented above, is quite taken into consideration.

Here are the comments of four young men: regarding Romanian women, the first describes them as 'good girls' and regarding Muslim women, says 'I accept them if they are good'; for the second one, the former are 'scapegoats'

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[11]An icastic completion of a fifty-year-old woman about Romanian women is 'they have a way of seeing life that is all their own'.

and the latter are 'very mysterious and sensual'; the third qualifies Romanian women as 'beautiful people with a particular character' and Muslim women as 'very tied to their ethnicity'; for the last one, Romanian women are 'bitches' and with reference to Muslim women, he writes 'no comment'. Here are some completions of older men: regarding Romanian women, a 50-year-old man says 'I salute them', and about Muslim women 'they have a narrow mentality'; regarding the former, another says that 'they take advantage of people in need' and about the latter 'I know few of them'; according to a 40-year-old graduate, Romanian women 'have blonde hair'; he mentions the lack of rights regarding Muslim women. Other men say: the former are 'beautiful' and the latter are 'not all the same'; Romanian women are 'very humble', Muslim women 'should remove their headscarves'; Romanian women are 'very nice' and Muslim women 'wear a burka'; and other comments that seem to confirm the impression expressed above.

Regarding Muslim women, almost all men, but also several women, complete the sentences in which they are mentioned, noting that their appearance is not visible: Muslims are 'women who wear clothes that differentiate them from normal people', 'women who wear the veil', 'they are different only in that they wear a burka'. The reasons given are various: *Fatima wears the burka for...* tradition, culture, constriction of customs, but above all for religion.

However, the fact that Muslim women cover themselves almost entirely seems to be perceived as a threat to our culture: 'they should not cover their faces,' many subjects declare. Many insist on the dress with fiery comments: 'no burka in Italy!' proclaims a young woman, 'as long as they live here, they should not wear the burka!', an 18-year-old writes.

3.3 Apparent inconsistencies in the protocols

A considerable number of respondents show not only tolerance but also a welcoming attitude– the women more than the older men; like some of the younger men, women seem to be attracted by cultural diversity. Like many other women, both young and old, a 26-year-old graduate likes the 'culture, food, clothes, music' of immigrants; a young graduate likes 'their culture', another admires 'the courage of the choices' and 'the ability to adapt'; two 45-year-olds admire immigrants for 'knowing the new culture', and 'their being different'. Several other subjects use appreciative expressions.

However, the comparative analysis of the completions of each protocol, one by one, shows that, considering the general attitude towards foreigners–also deduced from spontaneous comments–to a greater or lesser extent almost all those who make these kinds of statements apparently contradict each other. For

example, as Chirminisi also notes, several say they are ready to help an immigrant in difficulty, to embark on a romantic relationship with an individual of a different ethnicity, to treat a colleague of another culture[12] on the same level, but regarding the phrase *About immigrants I like...* the most common completion is 'nothing' or 'little'.

Here are some testimonies of inconsistency. A 45-year-old man with a high school diploma does not like the immigrants' 'color' and for him the word migrant evokes 'a global conspiracy', but he accepts political refugees, and says that non-EU nationals 'escape from something bad'. Regarding the sentence *Most Arabs...*he says 'they are ordinary people' and would approve a friend's engagement with a Muslim girl. A 27-year-old with a diploma in accounting completes the phrase *About immigrants I do not like...* with 'how they are welcomed', and the phrase *About immigrants I like...* 'their diversity', but then he declares that immigrants 'should not steal' and that he would avoid a meeting with a non-EU national. A 25-year-old man calls the latter a 'socially useful person' but completes the sentence *Most migrants...* with 'people committed to commit crime' and qualifies Moroccans as 'bad people'; for another, on the contrary, the Moroccans are 'good people', and says 'so be it' regarding the idea of falling in love with an immigrant but flatly rejects mixed marriages and 'avoids' political refugees[13]. A 22-year-old girl with a high school diploma shows open hostility towards immigrants but completes the sentence *Most migrants...*with 'are good people', and with regard to the word 'migrant' thinks 'of the journey they face'. Even a 49-year-old man with an elementary education qualifies most migrants in a positive way, but as far as immigrants are concerned he states that 'they must comply with our rules' and completes the sentence *If in my country on the street I meet a Muslim family...* with 'I look at them warily'. A 50-year-old woman with a high school diploma responded in a similar way regarding most migrants; furthermore, according to her, *Non-EU nationals come to Italy to...* 'flee their country', but political refugees 'come to Italy to have a good life'; she does not like anything about immigrants and says they 'must keep to themselves and not behave badly', mixed marriages should be avoided and if *A friend of mine is engaged to a Muslim girl …* 'God help him'.

The possible reasons for these apparent contradictions seem to me partly due both to the different meanings, to the emotions, assigned to certain terms by the various subjects, and to the nature of the sentences: some tend to be projective and others personal, in the meanings indicated in the previous paragraph. I will discuss these topics in the next two subparagraphs.

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[12]The phrases of reference are: *At the bar Mohamed feels bad, people* ...; *If I fall in love with an immigrant* ...; *At work one of my colleagues is Arab, the other colleagues...*
[13]The sentence is: *In my country there are political refugees, I ...*

3.4 Reactions to some terms

From a first reading, the different effect of the terms like 'migrant' and 'immigrant' immediately stand out, though they might appear similar.

For most of the interviewees the term 'migrant', declined in different sentences has no negative meaning, especially for older men. Sometimes they can relate to them: they think about their own ancestors or of themselves in other periods of life; or they think of a dangerous journey, of suffering or at least an uncomfortable situation: 'journey, suffering', 'I think of the movement, of the journey they face', 'boats in a stormy sea', 'the whole road traveled', 'the search for stability'; 'I think of myself because I will have to go abroad soon,' says a young graduate; and also another 45-year-old man, also a graduate, says: 'I think of the sea and how many people are lost'; yet another 'becomes sad' about the word migrant and at same time declares that *People do not trust...* 'immigrants'. A 55-year-old with a middle school certificate defines migrants as 'people living in another land' and states that people do not trust 'emigrants'. A female graduate, with regard to the word migrant, thinks of 'a man who seeks his fortune outside his own nation'; and a 45-year-old man, despite being strongly hostile towards foreigners, 'feels sorry' for migrants, who are 'good people', whereas immigrants, whom people do not trust, 'must return to their country' and finally, concerning the Moroccans, he says that 'they are idiots'.

Conversely, as reported above in many completions, the term 'immigrant' is the one that causes more mistrust, even open hostility: from 'immigrants must not push their culture' to 'criminals' (but some use this epithet also for migrants).

There are less clear reactions to the term 'non-EU national' (in Italian *extracomunitario*): 'socially useful person', they come to 'live better', 'for work', 'out of desperation' but also 'to steal work' and various subjects declare that people do not trustnon-EU nationals. Some write that they come 'to escape the war'. For a 28-year-old female graduate, they 'will always have hard ships'. In addition, several definitions are descriptive: 'a person who is not a resident in Europe', 'a person from another country', 'a black person', a 'foreigner' and the like. It is as if the 'extra' prefix in the Italian term *'extracomunitario'* (non-EU national)evokes distance and extraneousness. In this sense, the completion of a 40-year-old male graduate, who is generally very supportive of integration, is emblematic: an immigrant is 'a person like us but different'; even a 22-year-old girl with a high school diploma uses the same adjective: 'different'.

It seems that for some of the interviewees the expression 'political refugee' is poorly understood. For an older man with a high school diploma, political refugees 'betrayed their country to help another', and for a 22-year-old male graduate, 'they are exploited'. Many avoid them, one would "send them home",

another says 'yes, if they accept our rules'. For a 40-year-old woman with a middle school certificate, political refugees 'raise concern' and some young women declare 'I do not accept them', 'I do not agree', 'They live at the expense of the state' and the like. Many are 'indifferent'.

Regarding terms, at first glance the completions to the sentence *The ethnic groups I know...* seem to reveal a widespread ignorance of the word 'ethnicity' and a frequent confusion between the meaning of ethnicity and that of religion, even among young people and graduates. Many formulate such lists: 'Islamics, Muslims, Catholics, Jews', 'Muslims, Orthodox', 'Arabs and Buddhists', 'Muslims, Arabs, Asians', 'Muslims and Romanians', 'Africans and Muslims', 'Arabs and Muslims', 'Africans, Muslims, Europeans', 'Muslims, Arabs, Romanians, Albanians', 'Chinese, Romanians, Moroccans, Muslims'. As you can see, observers of the Muslim religion in particular are perceived as belonging to an ethnic group. But in effect, 'While the idea of race has erroneous biological implications, that of ethnicity is a purely social concept. It refers to the cultural traits that distinguish a given community of people' (Giddens 1989/2006, 146) and it is undeniable that religion is a strong cultural trait.

Finally, I should point out only that in the protocols two terms occur with considerable frequency: fear and respect, expressed mainly by young women.

Here are some examples: *My family* ... 'is afraid of migrants'; Francesca 'is afraid' of a non-EU citizen who sits next to her on the bus; 'People are afraid' of Arabs and/or non-EU nationals; on the contrary, some subjects stress the fear of immigrants towards Italians.

Many complete the phrase *From a friend I expect...* with 'respect', and some write the same about the sentence *For me it is important...*; the term occurs in other completions: the other colleagues 'respect' the Arab colleague; regarding immigrants, they do not like the fact 'that they do not respect', *If I fall in love with an immigrant girl...* 'I would respect her', as well as I 'respect' the black neighbor; *My friends think of me as...*'respectful', *Fatima wears the burka for...*'respect', and the like.

3.5 Projective sentences and personal sentences

It seems that the phrases that often return distrust or even hostility towards foreigners are the so-called projective ones. Instead, in the personal phrases the image of self is more inclined to welcome. And this, as already mentioned, could be one of the reasons for the inconsistencies found in the protocols, together with the different connotation assigned to some terms and also to other reasons.

If we suppose that people have put in place a projection process, which would therefore reveal the deepest and perhaps unconscious ideas, it can be thought that many subjects demonstrate, and perhaps believe, that they are not

xenophobic, 'I have nothing against immigrants but they must leave Italy', as a young man comments at the end of the interview.

The completions of the sentence *Immigrants think that we Italians are...*are varied: some subjects say 'good', 'altruistic', 'welcoming' and the like; others say 'racist', 'ethnocentric', 'inhospitable'; finally a large part of the interviewees declare that immigrants see us as victims, an image exemplified by completions such as 'stupid', 'foolish', 'submissive people', 'land of plenty', 'non-believers', 'Utopia', 'we allow them to do what they want', 'too good', 'land of conquest', 'sheep', 'too liberal'.

I have noticed that those who assume a benevolent image of the Italians or one that is considered unjust (the first two types of comments) are generally more tolerant, or really welcoming. Conversely, those who accuse foreigners of believing that Italians are weak and cowardly generally have more aggressive reactions. This observation suggests that in this sentence the projection has actually been activated: the interviewees attribute to the immigrants their own vision of the Italians, which in fact is consistent with their thinking.

Below are other phrases about which the participants seem to have projected their ideas and desires. In the sentence *My friends think of me...,* almost all the completions are synthetically praiseworthy and flattering, in varying degrees; *People don't trust..., When people see an Arab..., On the street a non-EU guy asks for help, people...*: the completions of these sentences mostly reflect attitudes and fears that manifest themselves in the rest of the protocol and in the spontaneous comments.

Whether you project or report the behavior of others, the phrase *On the bus next to Francesca sits a non-EU citizen, she...* very few have reacted with tolerant attitudes–almost all have emphasized distance, rejection, fear: 'looks out of the window', 'is bothered', 'changes places', 'gets up', 'is worried', 'is afraid'.

4.   Concluding considerations

Considering gender and age groups, in general women seem more inclined to acceptance than men; they are more attracted by cultural diversity and open to contact with different people, but there are also young women graduates who show strong hostility. Young people are less sensitive to the consequences of immigration than adults and more attracted to the cultural aspects of other ethnic groups.

Two of the problems that have emerged in the context of welcoming immigrants regard alarm about the danger of dissolving our culture and traditions, and the unpleasant impression of foreigners' stubborn attitudes of isolation and their reluctance to integrate.

It is therefore necessary to start and/or expand initiatives that encourage tolerance and acceptance of Italians (and that perhaps exploit the charm of exoticism, as mentioned above) but, in the light of these results, it does not seem less important to turn to foreigners– whose lack of consideration of culture and local customs is complained of– to try to bring together cultures perceived as distant and create a 'sense of us'(Cooley 1956)[14].

The conjecture about the disposition of the local population towards foreign women reminds us that we must continue to address the problems related to the image of women and gender relations. Of course, they also have structural causes, as do some accusations against migrants for not working and/or 'loitering': many do not know or forget that governmental choices and bureaucratic delays, which sometimes last for years, prevent many immigrants from working regularly because they still lack the necessary documents.

As for the words to be used, what emerged suggests that the term 'migrant' rather than 'immigrant' should be used because the former promotes empathy and identification. In addition, 'foreigner' should be preferred to 'non-EU national'(*extracomunitario* in Italian) because the latter probably arouses a greater sense of foreignness and distance, of 'different from our European community' and is therefore a little more threatening.

The aim of the was also to study the impact and effectiveness of this non-directive tool – Sentence Completion Technique – built *ad hoc* to detect traits that are deep and difficult to investigate, such as values, in a considerable number of people in a short time.

As for the effect on the participants, as reported by Chirminisi and the other interviewers who used this technique for investigations on different topics[15], the interview aroused appreciation, curiosity and great collaboration. A young woman reported: 'I felt pleasantly involved; at first you think it's a game and you think it deals with trivial topics, but then you understand that it strikes important and deep chords of our lives'; other young women stated: 'it touched me a lot', 'I find it a learning experience'; a 48-year-old male law graduate reported: 'I find it very interesting, a study that should be done more frequently by various study centers to promote integration'. Women in particular appreciated this experience because, they commented, they felt they could express themselves freely.

As for the preference of the form– written or oral–most of the young people (both male and female) preferred the former, perhaps because they use

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[14]In this sense I quote the interesting comment of a young musician: 'The emigrant is treated as a commodity of political exchange and leads Westerners to think badly of people who have problems and at the same time leads people who have problems to think that Westerners do not care'.

[15]Sabatino (2014-2015) on gender relations and Gangitano (2017-2018) on homophobic attitudes.

the written communication of social media and they are more shy than older people, which leads them to avoid interaction with the interviewer. On the other hand, most older men, whose main educational qualification is the middle school certificate, preferred the oral form because– as some have said– it was not necessary to pay attention to the structure of the sentence and indeed, many used dialectal expressions. On the contrary, most older women prefer the written form and seem to have made more effort to participate in this experience: some have said that they prefer to write to better reflect, to avoid making mistakes and 'trivial' completions. It seems, therefore, that the preference is influenced by age, level of education and sex but also by the characteristics of the personality: about half of the subjects said they appreciate the oral form more because 'it does not give time to reflect and therefore the completions are more immediate and spontaneous', 'I like to talk and communicate'; those who instead preferred the written form (especially young people) gave as a reason: 'you can reflect a little better', 'I felt more sincere because I do not feel judged as I write', 'I express myself better'.

It is not yet clear, therefore, which of the two forms is most welcome and effective: in order to throw light on these aspects it will be necessary to continue to analyze the outcome of the different presentations, perhaps in other investigations.

It also seems necessary to work further on the construction of sentences addressing some questions that arise in part from the considerations in point 3.5: which sentences worked well as projective sentences? Which, on the other hand, favor ambiguous completions, in the sense that it is difficult to understand whether the interviewee attributes the emotion felt to himself or to others? What are the sentences in which more similar completions are recorded and, on the contrary, what are the ones in which more different completions appear, which therefore distinguish more the attitudes of the interviewees? Finally: which sentences do not seem effective and/or relevant and should be eliminated?

In any case, the results obtained encourage us to consider the instrument used as valid, which for the most part does not offer pre-established meanings, as the comments I quote testify: a 45-year-old woman working as a lawyer stated: 'Reading certain sentences, instead of thinking of certain contexts that may be obvious, I imagined something else. As for the sentence *Moroccans...* I thought that they sell interesting things'; an agricultural graduate of the same age hits the mark: 'the sentences are malicious, ambiguous, without interpretations'; an unemployed young man, with a degree in Nursing Sciences said: 'at the time some sentences leave you surprised, you respond immediately and your answers can surprise you'; an Arts student stated: 'you have to

associate sentence and thought immediately and so a sincere thought emerges because you don't have time to reflect'.

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