

Introduction

When, in 2005, Professor Dario Melossi and his collaborators completed their first study about the normative socialization of second generation immigrants¹, the foreign children in Italian schools were 282683, representing a percentage of 3.5% of the total school population. The quick increase of their presence (tangible sign of the corresponding increase of their incidence in the country as well as attestation of their growing stability) happened unexpectedly at the turn of the century, and it was quite a surprise for the social analysts, the school operators and the community in general, when the number increased of almost 50000 units in the passage from the school year 2002/03 to the school year 2003/04. This data causes even more sensation now, as, almost five years after those first attempts at quantitative research on this very sensitive topic, the number of foreigners in the Italian school system has reached the considerable amount of 673 592 units, with an average incidence on the school population of 7.5% (and with an impressive yearly increase, of + 14.5% in 2008/09 and of +7.1% in 2009/10).

The study was done in 2003–2005 at the University of Bologna by Dario Melossi, Alessandro De Giorgi and Ester Massa, as part of a larger project co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research titled *Culture, Rights and Normative Socialization of Children and Adolescents*, and coordinated by Guido Maggioni (University of Urbino). The results were first presented at the Department of Sociology of the University of Washington, Seattle, October 25, 2006, and at the *International Conference Law and Society in the 21st Century*, Berlin, July 25–28, 2007, and published in *Melossi D., De Giorgi A. and Massa E. (2009)*.

How long will this trend continue? Does it mean that the school habits, the teaching methods, the *face* of our classes are destined to change irrevocably, leaving behind all the good old-fashioned school ways? Moreover, how will school cope with the emergency represented by foreigners bringing new values into the classroom and new approaches to education? And, above all, will this situation of cultural transition and normative confusion bring to an increase in the disciplinary problems inside the classes, will it mean more juvenile delinquency? These are some of the questions that politicians, school operators, teachers and, most of all, parents present everyday inside the everlasting debate about the school system in Italy, without, however, finding truly satisfying answers. The fact that in the recent reported news (as well as in the other media) there has been an actual explosion of concern over abominable cases of bullying and violence at school², for sure did not help an already precarious situation, where the sources of all evils in the school system are identified with the ever growing heterogeneity of the classes.

The topic of the relationship between international migrations and deviance (sometimes criminality) constitutes a “classic topic” in criminological literature. Suffice to remember this kind of studies started out already at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States (a country that found its very beginning thanks to migrations and therefore has always had a preeminent interest in this kind of explorations). They lasted

² The debate has become increasingly tense after the national media had brought to the general attention some very despicable episodes of bullying happened during the last years. Perhaps the most well known, and the one that caused the highest alarm for the general audience, happened in 2006, when a group of adolescents attending a northern high school beat up a disabled mate inside their classroom, filming all his humiliations through a mobile phone camera and publishing it on the internet.

throughout the century, while scholars from other parts of the world, especially Europe, joined in, perhaps driven in the field by the urge to analyze and interpret this issue because of the emergency represented by the new pervasiveness of migratory flows.

There has been plenty of analyses in this topic, going from classic ones, based mainly on a socio-economic approach typical of Marxist thinking, to those characterized by a more socio-ecological approach³, until the arrival of the newest interpretations, focused on a more relational kind of perspective, considering the contexts of the country of origin and the relationships between these and the host country, the personal, economic, political and social bonds that are set between the two contexts, and the relationships between the present migratory flows and the previous ones (Zanfrini, 1998).⁴

Criminological research, through the passing decades, has documented the effects of the stable settlement of immigrant groups in the host country, sometimes leading to negative assessments, but usually also useful to demystify stereotypes widespread among the residents.

If it is sure that migratory phenomena represent a serious social issue, which can indeed produce a series of psycho-pathological or socio-pathological problems (Ferracuti, 1970; Aa.Vv., 1963, 1975; Rossi, 1971), nevertheless it is not possible to set a deterministic link between the difficulties of the immigrant in adapting to the new community and his (or her) levels of criminality.

³ For example, see *Pollini* (2002b), who cites Marx's socio-economic approach, Ravenstein's socio-geographical approach, Durkheim's socio-morphological approach, Thomas and Znaniecki's humanistic approach and Park's socio-ecological approach.

⁴ See *Bandini, Gatti, Gualco, Malfatti, Marugo, Verde* (2003:242).

Historically, the criminological research on the topic has focused either on the comparison between foreigners' and natives' criminality (both from a quantitative and a qualitative perspective) or on the problem of the high crime rates of the so-called "second generation" of immigrants⁵. In addition, sociological research has often analyzed the possibility of discriminatory practices towards the immigrants, especially when perpetrated by the media or public opinion.

As it is known, the phenomenology and the features of migration issues, especially referring to "second generations", change greatly from country to country, following the different characteristics of the country itself and of the migrating people. In countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, which share a colonial past, the main part of immigration actually comes from ex-colonies, linked to the mother country not merely by cultural traditions, but usually by existing rights, and, sometimes, even by citizenship, while in other countries, like Germany and, more recently, Italy and Spain, the immigration phenomenon has assumed different features, regarding particularly people with very detectable cultural, behavioural and physical differences.

In Italy, immigration-related issues did not arise in public debate until a relatively recent time. During the decades when other European Countries were receiving massive flows of migrants, Italy was, on the

⁵ The problem has been perceived especially at supranational level. The Council of Europe financed several comparative studies (like, for example, *Ferracuti*, 1970), assuming dispositions and giving directly directions to the member states. For instance, it is worth mentioning the resolution (75)3, referring to the juridical and administrative aspects of criminality among migrant workers, and the recommendation (88)6 on the problems regarding second generations, particularly the crime prevention, the police activities, the taking-charge systems of the juvenile courts, all interventions aimed to avoid discrimination against foreign minors.

contrary, dealing with its own people's emigration, initially from the southern agricultural countryside to the industrialized northern areas, and then to other European and American countries. It's been only since the late 1980s – early 1990s, that Italy has begun to consider international migrations on its territory as a national issue, and as a “problem” that had to be addressed somehow. Because of this reasons, research on the criminological aspects of migrations is relatively new in Italy, and in particular, there are still very few studies on the topic of “second generations”, which represents a new phenomenon in Italian society (but, at the same time, quite an urgent one).

Internationally, on the other hand, the problem of the adaptability of the children of foreigners born in the host country (or come here at a very early age) has become increasingly more pressing and has received an ever growing attention. Different methodologies have been used to examine it, particularly in order to assess the crime rates of this group and to compare it with that of the native and first generation youngsters, in order to verify the old criminological assumption regarding higher crime rates for second generation exponents, and the existence of specific “risk factors” for these children. Moreover, even when not directly aimed at a criminological investigation, the purely sociological examination of this issue represents an important frontier for researchers, since, through the analysis of this phenomenon, it is possible to explore a crucial node of the whole society, both in the comprehension of the changes it is subjected to, and in the determination of its responses to these tentative changes, particularly in terms of social division or cohesion. The birth of a second generation of immigrants, in fact, constitutes a social fact that is not possible to ignore, and represents a real testing ground of the civility of a nation, which cannot

deceive itself anymore thinking migrations only as a temporary fact. The immigrants' children, making the phenomenon visible, make it also unavoidable.

On this topic, Sayad affirms that the birth of second generation disrupts the silent and precarious mechanisms of acceptance of foreigners, that was based on their being temporary.

Emigration and immigration are social mechanisms that need to disregard each other to be as they should be
(Sayad, 2002:14)

This clearly brings up a series of questions, both regarding the social integration of the new citizens and regarding the reaction of the (formal and informal) control agencies to the realization of this new situation. The attitude that society as a whole has in respect to the second generations (and, consequently, the attitude that these immigrants assume regarding the receiving society) is, in turn, an indication of the level of civility of society itself. Maurizio Ambrosini wrote:

The quality of the life in common, the society segmentation (or lack of) on the base of ethnic affiliation, the risk of the formation of pockets of marginality or manifest deviance, the possibility of an enrichment of economic and cultural dynamism, are in a large measure linked to the living conditions which are going to be offered to second generations and to the opportunities of social promotion they will meet. (Ambrosini, 2004).

In the end, it can be affirmed that “it is substantially observing the second generations that we can evaluate the outcome of the experience of the immigration in our society” (De Marie and Molina, 2004).

Foreigners’ criminality and the problem of the second generations’ crime rates

The topic of the relations between immigration and crime has always been an object of discussions, and has represented a strong stimulus to a number of studies aimed at testing their effective interdependences.

Surveys about foreigners’ deviance effectively started almost a century ago, promoted by public bodies in order to reassure the native population about the lack of a real danger deriving from migrations, and to favour the integration of these new members into the society⁶.

In 1994 ISTAT published a report indicating that “in Italy there had been a progressive entrance of foreigners into crime”, affirming that “a considerable amount of immigrants coming from third-world countries, not being able to find the integration opportunities they hoped for, ended up constituting an inexhaustible source of cheap help for criminal activities”

⁶ The most interesting indications to this end begin in the United States with the second appointed board of enquiry in 1901, where it is possible to read that, in spite of what the common sense suggested, “the whites born abroad were less criminal the those born in the United States” (Abbott, 1931:51). Moreover, in this report is mentioned for the first time the problem of the second generation immigrants, and their difficult relationships with parents, which were considered as the main trigger for their higher crime rates (ibidem:52). The third commission, dating from 1908 to 1911, came also to the conclusion that none of the existent data could lead to affirm that immigration had produced an increase in criminality larger than the corresponding increase in adult population (Tonry 1997: 21).

(ISTAT, 1994, 14). After 4 years, though, the Italian national institute for statistics returned on the topic attributing the “high presence of foreigners into the criminal activities to factors connected to their particularly uncomfortable socio-economic conditions... their condition of irregularity, their culture conflicts, their absence of family bonds” (ISTAT, 1998:104).

The scholars who approached this topic did not take a precise stand: faced with official statistics, which indeed present higher criminal rates for foreigners and a particular presence of immigrants in prison, some⁷ have effectively come to the conclusion that foreigners in Italy are more involved into criminal activities than Italian people (considering also how foreigners are in proportion more present in those categories that for gender, age and social class are associated with crime). Other scholars, instead⁸, affirm that the higher number of foreign subjects emerging from criminal statistics is just the external sign of the fact foreigners are denounced to the authorities more easily and more frequently than Italians, and therefore their higher figure of crime is just the symptom of an actual discrimination acted out by native people and, particularly, by the police and the judicial system.

Melossi, for instance, in a study carried out in collaboration with the Regional Government of Emilia-Romagna, measured the difference in the number of occasions in which Italians and foreigners were stopped by the police during the previous year (Melossi, 1999). At first the results showed that Italians were proportionately stopped more than foreigners, leading to the inevitable conclusion that no discrimination on foreigners was operated by formal control agencies. But when the scholar looked at the circumstances in which these stops were done (particularly, if the stopped

⁷ For example *Barbagli* (1998), *Zincone* (1997), *Segre* (1993), *Melotti* (1993), *Rey* (1993).

⁸ For example *Quassoli e Chiodi* (2000), *Melossi* (1999), *Palidda* (2000), *Melossi* (2003), *Dal Lago* (1999).

person was driving a car, a cycle or if he or she was simply walking), the data changed completely: the probability of being stopped while on foot for foreigners was ten times higher than for Italians! Obviously in this kind of situation physical appearance has a fundamental role in the police officer's choice of the person to stop, as it is obvious that on this occasion a certain grade of discrimination was operating.

Conversely, a completely different result was achieved by Killias, who, already back in 1988, produced an interesting review of all the European empirical studies on this topic from 1970 (Killias, 1988a). He came to state that evidences of a discriminatory behaviour by the judicial system were only present in some qualitative studies⁹, while quantitative research demonstrated, on the contrary, how discriminative behaviours are in fact very rare, and with great probability should disappear completely if the researchers would consider the influence of intervenient factors just like crime seriousness, recidivism and the offender's behaviour during the trial¹⁰.

From a purely sociological point of view, it must be recalled, along with Durkheim, that in society it is always possible to identify a tension, more evident in periods of crisis and transition, towards a gathering around society's shared values, or, more often, against some kind of mentality (or even against people) considered different, in order to re-define, *a contrario*,

⁹ Like, for instance, *Albrecht and Pfeiffer (1979)*, *Albrecht, Pfeiffer and Zapka (1978)*, *Bielefeld, Kreissl and Muenster (1982)*.

¹⁰ The same author, in a 2009 article, combining the observation of national surveys, victimization studies and self-report surveys since 1997, confirmed his belief that higher crime rates for foreign born youths are not the product of institutional selective criminalization or people's propensity to denounce crime committed by immigrants, but rather that living and growing up within the immigration context may be more significant in pushing young lives into crime (Killias, on this point, affirms that "according to international survey data, offending among migrant youths from Balkan countries is far more common in Switzerland than among adolescents living in Bosnia-Herzegovina") (Killias, 2009:33).

the limits of the community itself. To use J. Edgar Hoover's expression, a disaggregating society can be effectively reunited and made compact by defining a "public enemy", identified from time to time in a subject whose characters are largely recognizable and able to embody all the evils in society. Criminals, indeed, as Durkheim and Erickson¹¹ had affirmed, are the perfect candidates to represent this "public enemy". Governments then find it easy to declare the "war against drug trafficking", "against illegal immigration", "against contraband", using a technique that, according to Garland, is really aimed at re-affirming the supreme power of the State over crime control, regardless of its obvious failure. On the one hand it emphasizes the efforts put into the repression of a certain social plague, while on the other it conveys to the population a subliminal message aimed at making them aware of the efforts necessary in order to maintain social order (Garland, 1996). Since its beginning, criminological literature has often highlighted the problem of high crime rates in second generation immigrants. It started to be a source of concern already in the first years of the last century and, besides being an openly addressed issue of the Wickersham Commission (1929), it represented also one of the problems at the center of several classical criminological essays, like, for example, William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki's famous study on the condition of the Polish peasants and their integration into American society (dated 1920). In this work, the two scholars affirmed that it was "a well-known fact that the number of crimes is proportionally much higher among the sons of the immigrants than among immigrants themselves" (Thomas e Znaniecki, 1918-20). Seven years later, Trasher's study brought to the general knowledge that most of the 25000 members of the 1300 juvenile

¹¹ See *Durkheim* (1895) and *Erickson* (1966).

gangs in Chicago was constituted by second generation immigrants (Thrasher, 1927). This fact was explained by the Wickersham Commission with the gradual loss of immigrants' parental control, started when, arrived into the American territory and finding themselves in conditions of extreme poverty and need, both parents had to work for long hours, leaving their children alone, generally in degraded and ill-famed areas. The children, on the other hand, did not help the situation with their feeling of superiority in respect to their parents and their being ashamed of their country of origin's customs. (Bowler, 1931:162). However, regardless the vivid picture of the juvenile delinquency of those times, the Wickersham Commission was not able to come to a real conclusion about the problem of second generations, although some studies carried out in the 1930s showed how, as regards crime rates, the sons and daughters of immigrants were getting closer to their native contemporaries (which, compared with first generation immigrants, had always had higher crime rates). In conclusion, the only possible affirmation was that, in only one generation, the gap between Americans' and foreigners' crime rates seemed to be almost filled.

The social alarm caused by this situation has not really calmed down during the decades, but, on the contrary, it still constitutes a very open debate. Over the recent years, in fact, the issue, other than being addressed by the scientific community, has been adopted by the media all over Europe, which stressed the growing social alarm coming from the people. Perhaps one of the most significant examples of this concern was represented by the events of the New Year's Eve of 1997, when some juvenile gangs in Strasbourg, composed for the majority of boys aged from 12 to 16, were responsible of several arsons and other vandalisms. The newspapers identified them as the children of the so called "beurs", namely

the sons and daughters of Turkish, Algerian and Moroccan immigrants living in the poorest neighbourhoods and sporting the highest unemployment rates in France (Martinotti, 1998). For many scholars this episode, and the ones following, were the confirmation of the alarming predictions already well known about second generations. It has to be considered, in fact, that when a crime is perpetrated by an immigrant or a youngster, its causes are somehow “socialized”, explained by some specific peculiarity of the group the criminal belongs to, without further investigation about the psychological or personal reasons influencing the subject’s actions. Therefore, crimes committed by young people inside the family circle urge reflections about youth conditions and adolescents’ relationships with adults, while crimes committed by foreigners stir up controversies and concerns about immigrants’ condition and migration policies. In respect to this point, Agustoni (2008) affirmed that, in facts, the young and the immigrant constitute what Stanley Cohen defined as *folk devils* (Cohen, 1972), people that media portrays as outsiders and deviant, fuelling in this way their self-identification with that social role.

Considering the features that sociological literature associates to “second generations” with a certain regularity, it can be noticed that they all refer to some sort of discontinuity this group presents in respect to native contemporaries and older, foreign born relatives¹². A first, evident discontinuity is constituted by the socio-political condition proper to this group. In many European countries, second generation children are automatically recognized as citizens, through the so-called *ius soli* rule (namely, citizenship follows the birth on the national territory). However, there are also countries, like Italy, where obtaining citizenship is a hard and

¹² For the description of the main discontinuities between first and second generation of immigrants I refer to *Demarie and Molina* (2004: XIV-XIX).

difficult matter. In this case, in fact, despite the modern European trends, the rule in force is the *ius sanguinis*, which means that only children born from native parents are allowed to be citizens, and, therefore, the sons and daughters of the foreigners regularly residing in the country, even if born on the national territory, must be considered foreigners as well. It is clear how, in this case, immigrants' children, who were raised in the host country, usually face an actual paradox, namely a condition of a practical integration in the social reality of the country to which does not correspond the possibility of a real participation to associative and political life¹³. Referring to this point, Andall (2002), in her quasi-pioneering study about the African second generations in Milan, highlighted the sense of semi-extraneousness that these persons have to face every day, experiencing a systematic discrimination operated by police and other control agencies. The difficulty of conjugating the physical appearance of a black person with the Italian status leads, in fact, to a series of strategies which can involve further migrations (particularly towards northern Europe) or a self-identification with a supranational kind of nationality (usually the European one) able to overcome the barriers created by the hybrid condition in which this group find itself (Mezzadra, 2001). Referring to the continuous discriminations, Andall (*ibidem* :300) specifies that:

Police reactions to the visibility of young black men in Milan highlight the potential for the social exclusion of the second generation. One of the more disturbing themes to permeate my interviews with all of the older black men was the harassment they experienced at the hands of the police,

¹³ For a deepening of the topic, see *Ambrosini. and Molina* (2004:12) and *Caritas* (2004).

reminiscent of the infamous 'sus' laws that the second generation of African-Caribbean origin were subjected to in the UK (cf. Roberts 1982). Young black men in Milan were frequently stopped by the police and forced to undergo routine checks. They were not generally apprehended when on their own, or when they were the only black person amongst white Italian friends; rather it was the visibility of two or more black men that precipitated unwanted police attention (Andall, 2002:399)¹⁴

A second feature, proper to second generations, is constituted by this group's different system of expectations in respect to the first generation: while parents are more attached to customs, values and behaviours typical of their country of origin, and rarely find themselves totally embedded in the new culture, their children, born and grown up in the new society and educated in the new country's schools, share the same values and expectations of their native contemporaries, and hardly settle for their parents' socio-economic position. This, in turn, leads necessarily to some strong identity issues, indeed common to all adolescents (i.e. the struggle for the construction of an original identity, between the desire of being conform and the desire of being different, the generational conflict with parents and older relatives, etc..) but results, in this case, amplified by the cultural gap between them and other members of the family. Referring to this point, the sociological literature, especially in the post-war period, emphasized the diminished role of family as the "base unit" in the social

¹⁴ On this topic, once again it is useful to recall the study carried out by *Melossi* (1999) on police behaviour towards immigrants in Emilia-Romagna.

life of the second generations¹⁵: because of the cultural problems with their parents and the usually lower importance attributed to family by host societies (which are generally more oriented toward individualism), the young foreigners usually choose an “artificial family”, made up by peers sharing the same condition, over a “natural family” that they consider inadequate¹⁶.

[...] it is universally apparent that the child of the immigrant – at least of immigrants bringing old world cultures most at variance with that of America – is subjected to mental conflicts through the clash of varying approved patterns of behaviour, especially those of his family versus those of school and play group. This clash breaks down respect for the old patterns and produces a certain moral anarchy or an anti-social gang morality before American patterns are fully accepted. (Taft, 1934:71)

It is therefore comprehensible the attraction that these youngsters have towards urban gangs, which are able to “normalize” their differences through forms of aggregation based onto the ethnic origin of the members, turning what was previously considered as an handicap to an empowering feature. In this way, they can regain a certain degree of self-esteem, through the esteem attributed to the group as a whole (Solivetti, 2008). It has to be said that juvenile gangs represent the major source of concern for society as well as for politics, probably because they represent a sort of “point of

¹⁵ See, for example, *Eisenstand* (1951).

¹⁶ See, with regard to this topic, *Bossard* (1949).

contact” between the general concern referring to migrations and the “classic concern of adult community towards the youth - that is the concern that youngsters will not agree to internalize and reproduce the existing social order”(Ambrosini, 2008:91). These two elements together lead society to see foreign youngsters as “dangerous classes” (Chevalier, 1976).

Furthermore, returning to look at the delinquency of the second generations, it has to be stressed that, when we talk about immigrants’ crime in Italy, their evident inclusion into the Italian criminal underworld follows well defined rules. Immigrants, in fact, are usually more active inside two specific crime sectors, namely drug smuggling and prostitution (and in the criminal activities that usually follow these two criminal environments). However, if in these cases it is of no use to deny the massive presence of the foreigners in the criminal underworld, at the same time it is important to stress that these crimes were certainly not “imported” in Italy by foreigners, but, on the contrary, they constituted already very remunerative criminal activities satisfying a demand from Italian population already present in the community (Melossi, 1999). This means that immigrants’ criminal acts cannot be defined as, for example, typically “Albanian” or “Rumanian behaviour” but they, on the contrary, are completely “Italian behaviour”, because they represent the product of a successful adaptation to the needs of Italian society. It can be said that there is here a reproduction of a situation similar to the one Bell described in his article titled “*Crime as an American way of life*”. Crime had become for the different immigrant groups come in the United States during the first decades of the 20th century a new way of pursuing the “American dream” (namely, the attainment of economic success)(Bell, 1953). In the same way, immigrants in Italy pursue a dream of integration and economic stability

through the commission of criminal acts that create a real “*Italian way of life*” (Melossi, 1999), representing a profitable (and often the only) way they have to pursue their goals.

In conclusion, it is still not clear if the higher crime rates attributed to the second generation of immigrants should be caused by the problems and discontinuities between them and their native contemporaries and families, or rather the reason should be found in an over-representation of the category in official reports because of an ever present discrimination against foreigners and society’s lack of recognition of hybrid foreign identities. However, a single important element seems to emerge from the analysis of the second generation’s condition in the sociological and criminological literature: second generation’s delinquency must not be intended as the product of a remaining “foreign” characteristic of the group, but rather as an attempt to approach the host society and merge with it .

Brief hints on a pilot study in the Bologna schools: short analysis of the results and unanswered questions

In the mentioned study carried out at the University of Bologna between 2003 and 2005 (Melossi, De Giorgi, Massa, 2009), the main object was to tackle the issue of the adolescents’ “normative socialisation” in the frame of a society more and more oriented towards a multicultural world, outlining the different forms of socialization experienced by young generations (with a particular reference to young immigrants), and examining the relation between their way of socialising – especially in their problematic aspects – and deviant behaviour, trying to find out which one of the criminological

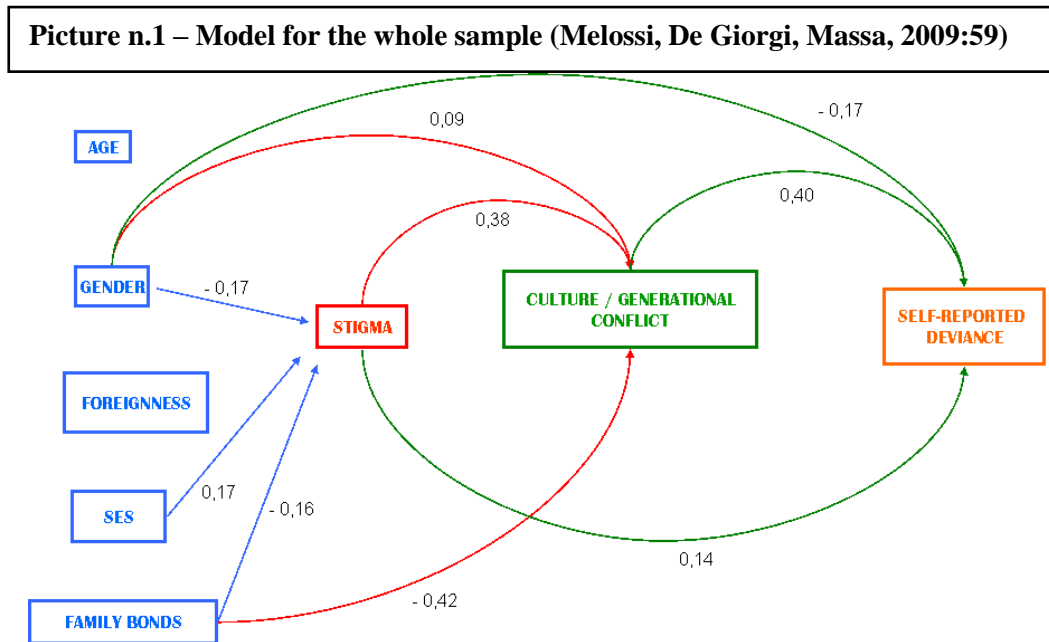
explanations of deviant behaviour (culture conflict, social control, labelling) was more suited to explain the collected data .

The study therefore developed a self-report survey, whose instrument was represented by a questionnaire (the vast part of which was structured as multiple choice questions, with different options graduated in terms of intensity), which was administered to 335 students (177 males and 158 females) attending the third year (8th grade) of four secondary schools in Bologna. The instrument had been constructed for providing an image as complete as possible of the context of integration in which the minors were in, as well as the different “capital” supply (economic, cultural and social) that minors could count on when they entered those contexts. A particular importance was attributed, obviously, to the questions directed to investigate the students’ possible involvement into deviant behaviour.

It must be added that, in the attempt to overcome the inadequacy of any binary definition (i.e., foreigners vs. Italians) in accounting for the multiple conditions pertaining to the status of “foreigner”, the researchers decided to create the complex variable *Foreignness*, a “continuous” variable describing the condition of “being a foreigner” , measuring the hypothetical distance between Italians and immigrants but without polarizing the sample around two rigid, discrete categories (Melossi, De Giorgi, Massa, 2009:56-57).

The elaboration of the data comprehended the production of descriptive statistics (to illustrate the main features of the sample), a correlation analysis (in order to understand the most significant relations among the variables), and a multiple regression analysis (aimed at testing the validity of a model of deviant behaviour created with the most significant variables in the set).

The picture below illustrates the model explaining deviant behaviour for the whole sample.

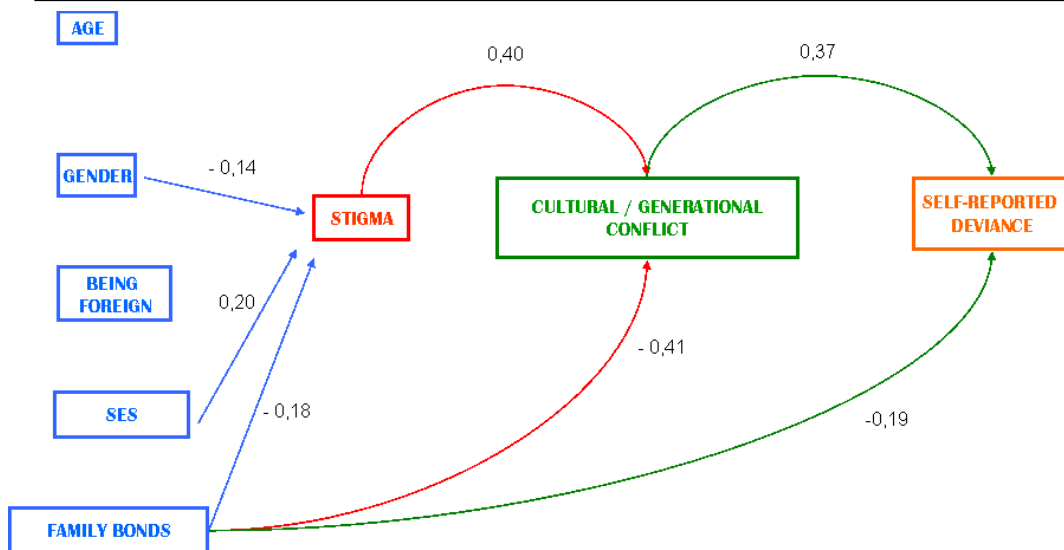


Trying to summarize the results, all things considered, the variable *Family Bonds* (measuring the strength of the relationships in the student’s family) seemed to be the most significant variable in the model, as it appeared to influence the strengthening of forms of self-stigmatization as well as the cultural conflict, which, in turn, correlated significantly to self-reported deviance (measured through the students’ answers to questions regarding their involvement into several minor crimes and misbehaviours). In short, the model suggested that the inclination to deviance (or at least to its confession) is more marked among those experiencing a strong level of cultural/generational conflict towards their family of origin, and that can be partly generated and fuelled by a certain sense of self-stigmatization

(particularly in the case of males belonging to families of middle-high status and with weak family bonds).

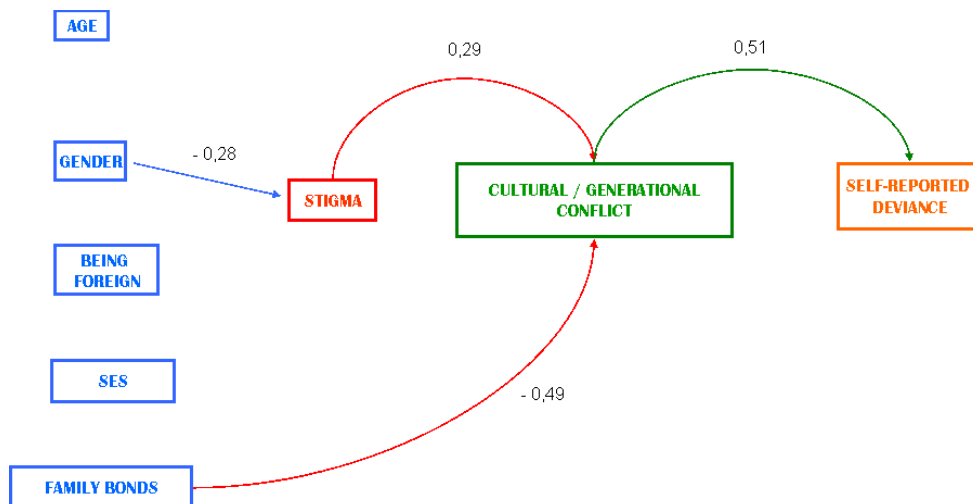
The considerations referring to the whole sample, however, are not fitting perfectly with the results coming from the disaggregated samples of Italians (Foreignness = 0) and foreigners (Foreignness > 0).

**Picture n.2 – Model for the Italian part of the sample
(Melossi, De Giorgi, Massa, 2008:120)**



Italians seemed to follow a model quite similar to the general one – also because of their higher number in the whole sample - but with an important difference: it was possible to spot a direct relation between the weakness of the *Family Bonds* and *Deviance*.

**Picture n.3 – Model for the foreign part of the sample
(Melossi, De Giorgi, Massa, 2008:122)**



For the sample formed only by foreigners, instead, the only variable that seemed significantly correlated with deviance was *Cultural Conflict*, the influence of which results even more evident if the variable is considered jointly to the others in the model. However it is important to mention that this complex variable included indicators intended to measure the conflict born out of cultural or ethnic differences, or out of different expectations, as well as indicators of a more “generational” conflict – related, in this sense, to both Italian and foreign minors. Most importantly, it seemed to be

confirmed the relevance of the variable *Stigma* (a complex variable measuring the children's sense of stigmatization), which was perceived more intensely by the males in the sample, but that, unlike the Italian case, was not explained by the variables in the previous levels (other than *Gender*).

In the light of what has been said, we can affirm that in this study there was no evidence of a greater inclination to delinquency of foreigners, while it appeared instead to be clear that the key condition in the adolescents' choice of behaviour was linked to their family condition: it concerned the level of control that parents hold on their children, and the level of confidence, trust and esteem sons have in their parents, seen as their guide and their projection in the future. If, for Italians, having weak family bonds can in part be considered as an autonomous cause of delinquency, for foreigners it goes entirely to fuel the conflicts inside the family (both of a generational or a more cultural nature), worsening the already fragile relationships between parents and children. It is possible, therefore, to affirm that, instead of being compelled to act deviantly by objective conditions of difference (such as being foreigner), the youngsters, both Italian and foreign, seem to be "pushed" to commit the first deviant acts by personal and psychological factors.

What remained to be explained was, in the case of foreigners, the conditions provoking a "stigma" and easing their recourse to deviant behaviour. The explanation provided by the model for foreign students— the only variable influencing the low self-esteem being *Gender*¹⁷ - leaves, in fact, space to wonder about which other factors, clearly not considered in

¹⁷ For the variable *Gender*, the elaborations used a dichotomous variable in which male = 0 and female =1.

the study (or having very weak effects, maybe because of the limited number of foreigners in the sample), can be determinant for the aetiology of foreigners' sense of stigmatization. Moreover, the scarce number of foreign students in the sample (59) did not allowed to operate a distinction among different ethnic groups, thus leaving the researchers with the doubt that this non-significance of the correlation between *Foreignness* and *Self-reported Deviance* was really the result of a “compensation effect” between a group of hyper-deviant foreigners (with very high levels of self-reported deviance) and a group of hyper-conformist foreigners (with very low levels of deviance).

The new study and the main purposes of this dissertation

In order to investigate the issues described above, in 2006 Dario Melossi and his collaborators¹⁸ decided to start a new self-report study, with a much bigger sample and a larger territorial extension, aimed at testing the main findings of the pilot research on a more representative group (Melossi, De Giorgi, Massa, 2009), as well as investigating some still obscure points.

The sample selected, as it will be explained more extensively in Chapter 5, comprehend 4775 subjects, distributed on the regional territory of Emilia-Romagna, with a foreign presence, well differentiated with regard

¹⁸ The research unit, coordinated by Dario Melossi, was composed by Ester Massa and Stefania Crocitti, and benefitted of the support and supervision of the Department for Safety and Local Police of the Region Emilia-Romagna. Many people deserve further credits for its realization: Angela Falzon, who actively helped the authors in the operative phases of the survey, Giovanni Sacchini, Dino Gibertoni and Eugenio Arcidiacono of the Department for Safety and Local Police of the Region Emilia-Romagna for their support in the statistical part of the study as well as their help with the management of the contacts with local governments and school authorities.

to the country of origin, representing 23% of the sample (1096 units, numerous enough to carry on reliable statistical elaborations).

Among the tasks the study aimed at accomplishing, my specific interest (and the purpose of this dissertation) focused on the topic of the stigmatization of young students, and on the attempt at discovering the elements generating this feeling, particularly for foreign students - who, in the previous study (Melossi, De Giorgi, Massa, 2009), seemed to be subjected to different influences than Italians. Particularly, among the factors the new survey considered (which ranged from personal to socio-economic and family reasons), the elements I found most interesting and connected with the condition of being foreigner, were the ones pertaining the school environment¹⁹, which sociological and criminological literature considers to be related to some stigmatization mechanisms²⁰ and to children's involvement into deviant activities²¹. Therefore, this dissertation will aim at finding out the characteristics of stigmatization happening inside the school environment, and which factors, with reference to the new self-report study, are able to influence the generation of these feelings, especially in the case of foreign students. In order to do so, I will previously provide a definition of the concept at the centre of the whole topic, the so-called "stigma", and an overview of the sociological and criminological literature about it. Later on, I will provide a general description of the main features and the advantages and limits of the chosen research method (self-

¹⁹ For instance, the attribution of grades, the subjection to disciplinary punishments, the difficulties to understand certain kind of lectures or to finish one's homework, the general management of the school system that sometimes privileges some child over others.

²⁰ See for example *Bandini e Gatti* (1987), *Polk and Schafer* (1972), *Portes and Rumbaut* (2001a) and, to some extent, *Braithwaite* (1981).

²¹ Particularly the studies dealing with the effects on deviance of school success, as for example, *Gottfredson* (1981), *Glueck and Glueck* (1968), *West* (1982), *Stark* (1979), *Maguin and Loeber* (1996).

report survey), as well as an analysis of the foreigners' presence in Italy, and especially in the region Emilia-Romagna. Then I will describe the most relevant characteristics of the Italian educational system, providing statistical data about its organization and management, and operating a brief evaluation of its efficacy through the analysis of the fundamental functions a scholastic system is intended to comply.

Finally, the focus will move onto the statistical elaborations and results coming from the self-report survey carried on from 2006 in the secondary schools in Emilia-Romagna. The main findings of this larger study will be discussed briefly in order to provide a suitable framework for the analysis of the elaborations regarding the students' sense of stigmatization and its causes, which will constitute the core of this dissertation.

A series of statistical elaboration will be run on the data emerging from the whole sample, and on those pertaining to the two sub-groups of Italians and foreigners, with the purpose of describing the main features of the youngsters attending secondary school in Emilia-Romagna, particularly referring to their attachment to conventional values, and their involvement in deviant behaviour.

Finally, with the help of more complex statistical elaborations, I will investigate the youngsters' stigmatization and its role in determining students' deviance. Through the construction of a structural model aimed at explaining students' recourse to deviant acts, I will test the hypothesis which identifies in some particularly stigmatizing elements of the school system some of the strongest factors in the creation of a stigmatized identity, which could represent, in the end, some of the most powerful factors pushing youngsters towards deviance.