Love boats: family formation and migration histories in Lombardy

Giuseppe Gabrielli[1], Laura Terzera[2], Salvatore Strozza[3], Anna Paterno[4]

[1] Department of Statistical Sciences "C. Cecchi", University of Bari (Italy)
[2] Department of Statistic, University of Milano Bicocca, Milano (Italy)
[3] Department of Theories and Methods of Human and Social Sciences, University of Napoli Federico II (Italy)
[4] Department for the Study of Mediterranean Societies, University of Bari (Italy)

1. Research topics and aims of the paper

Recent literature has shown that the "ways" and the "timings" to form and enlarge a family are very different. In the case of migrants the process of family formation depends on the ways and timings of migration event as well (Stark, 1988; Boyle, Halfacree, Robinson, 1998; Hill, 2004).

Migration's scholars often approached to the family issues from a cross-section perspective, however the life courses of family components and their migration events are affected by the household decision making. In other words, family and migration events are the results of a common decision making process in the life cycles (Bonomi, Terzera, 2003; Terzera, 2006; Gabrielli, Paterno, Strozza, 2007; Kulu, Milewski, 2007; Cortina, Esteve, Domingo, 2008). In synthesis there are two opposite profiles of immigrant (firstly, young single migrant with no children and, secondly, migrant in union with children); within which these positions, there are many intermediate family scenarios.

This paper discuss the role of the migratory experience in the family formation/reunification among immigrants in Lombardy (the Italian region where migratory flows and foreign presence are the most numerous), using "life histories" approach. The increasing presence of households (due to the increase of the reunifications, union formations and births) together with the availability of detailed survey data make Lombardy an interesting case of study.

2. Data and methods

The data come from the 2010 ORIM survey carried out by the Region of Lombardy and the Ismu Foundation (http://www.orimregionelombardia.it/index.php). The survey is based on a sample of 8,033 units, that are representative of the immigrants in Lombardy (legally or not) coming from countries with high emigration levels and aged 15 and over at the time of the survey. Center sampling is the sampling technique used (Blangiardo, Migliorati, Terzera, 2004).

The collected data concerns family and migratory histories, in addition to socio-demographic, economic, working, etc. characteristics. In particular, the data refers to the last migratory event and the last union event.

The first section of the paper we provide detailed descriptive analysis of the familiar and migratory picture of the interviewees; a sequence analysis (concerning family/migratory dynamics) is included in this section as well (using event history techniques).

In the next section we apply multivariate analysis, namely discrete-time logit models, in order to identify the main determinants of the transition to union formation and to family reunification in Italy. We pay particular attention to the effect of the gender, the area (or country) of origin and the age of migrants, together with the interactions among them.

In detail, three sets of models are constructed, considering different events and, consequently, observing different collectives. The first model considers the transition to present union and analyze

all the sample of interviewees (except individuals widowed, divorced and cohabiting in Italy), the second one regards the transition to family reunification in Italy and observes only couples at migration of the "forerunner" partner, and the third one studies the transition to union in Italy and observes only the singles at migration.

3. Preliminary results

The preliminary results obtained regard first of all the marital status of the interviewees and indicate that more than half of them are married, regardless of gender. The second most frequent status is the single migrants (42.5% of the men and 28.7% of the women); the women show also a significant proportion of single for widowhood and/or divorce (13.3%), three times higher than that of men. Stratifying by area (or country) of origin of foreigners, individuals who live more often the migratory experience in union are Asian men and women (mainly Indians), and African women (especially the Egyptian and Senegalese), while the Latin Americans (mainly Ecuadorians) show the highest proportion of singles in migration. For both genders, Latin-Americans, together with Eastern Europeans (especially Romanians), show a great spread of individuals in informal unions.

Considering the sub-sample of married people (tab. 1), the family and migration sequences can divide the foreigners into two equally numerous groups: a. those who married before migration of forerunner; b. those who have experienced the event of marriage after migration of forerunner.

Data show the strong interaction between "migration of the spouses" (if both foreigners) and marriage. More frequently the forerunner-migrant is the husband if the migration follows the marriage. Men prevail even when the first migration is in no-married condition. Therefore, among married people the protagonist of the first migration is more often the husband; this behavior is mainly stressed by Eastern Europeans, Africans and Indians. However, some cases deviate strongly from the general profile. For example, after entry into EU in 2007, Romanian spouses migrate jointly; Filipinos, Latin Americans and Eastern Europeans (non-EU) have significant percentage of forerunners among wives . In the end, Africans frequently show a sequence of events in which the men after the migration marriage in the origin country and then come back to Italy.

Whatever has been the sequential strategy, today the majority of married migrants live in Lombardy with their partner.

The collected data provides event-history information on the transition to present union. We exclude informal unions, divorced/separated and widowed foreigners from the analysis.

The cumulative functions in figure 1 show a delayed transition to union of men in respect to women. This gap increases among the youngest birth cohorts: men borne after the 1980's mainly reduce their propensity to get married at young ages (less than 30 years old). On the other side, the women' behaviour is characterized by a significant difference among birth cohorts and by a progressive anticipation of the transition to union from the oldest to the youngest cohort. In addition, other analysis (not here shown) observe the higher percentage of mono-parental immigrants among wives than husbands.

Other survival non-parametric analysis not here shown, estimate median ages and durations at the transitions to union formation/reunification (stratifying the interviewees by sex and origin country). More in detail, we observe: a) transition to present union (all sample); b) transition to family reunification in Italy (only couples at "forerunner" migration); c) transition to present union in Italy (only singles at "forerunner" migration).

In the first transition, we focus on the interviewees' age at present union (wherever it occurred). According to the previous results, the median age of women is lower than men (respectively 24.6 and 29.7). The gender difference increases among North-African foreigners and decreases among Latin Americans and Asians.
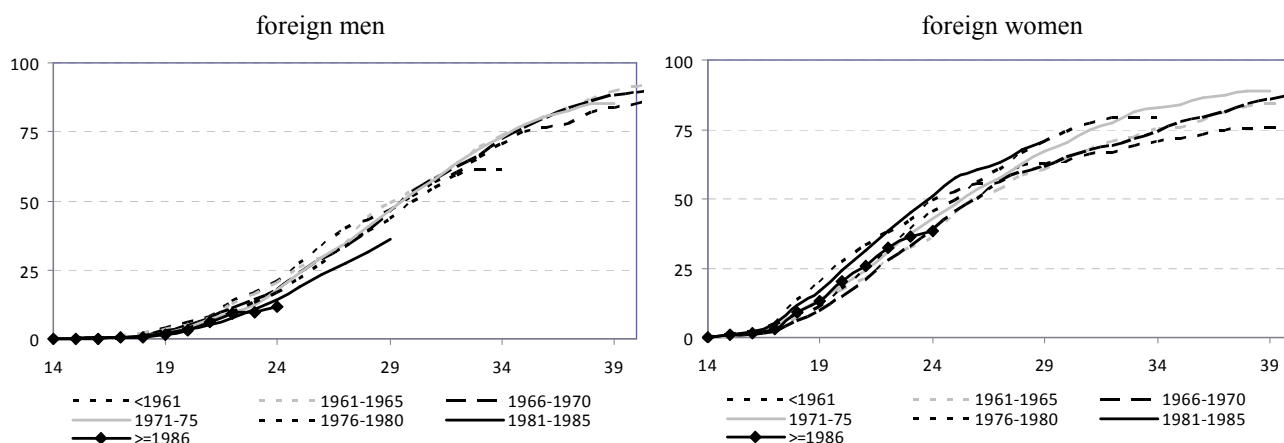
Tab. 1 Migration of the married couple by gender, areas of origin, and timing of the marriage.

Origin areas and main countries	Marriage before migration of forerunner				Marriage after migration of forerunner				Tot
	Migration of woman before man	Migration of man before woman	Migration of couple	No reunification of spouses in Italy	Migration of woman before man	Migration of man before woman	Migration of couple	No reunification of spouses in Italy	
Men									
Eastern Europe - UE	3.7	33.1	22.1	15.3	-	9.2	16.6	-	*100*
Romania	3.8	34.2	22.8	13.3	-	9.5	16.5	-	*100*
Eastern Europe – no UE	2.7	32.6	12.3	10.6	0.3	25.6	10.0	6.0	*100*
Albania	-	35.6	9.3	6.8		29.8	9.8	8.8	*100*
*Ukraine ***	20.0	2.9	28.6	14.3	2.9	14.3	17.1	-	*100*
Asia	3.4	23.2	6.0	23.9	1.3	21.2	10.9	10.0	*100*
Chine	5.7	12.6	14.9	6.9	-	20.7	31.0	8.0	*100*
India	0.7	25.5	2.1	22.7	0.7	31.2	4.3	12.8	*100*
Philippines	7.8	14.4	16.7	30.0	6.7	4.4	16.7	3.3	*100*
North Africa	0.9	14.2	4.7	12.5	0.6	38.9	9.6	18.5	*100*
Morocco	0.7	17.9	4.0	8.1	1.1	38.8	10.3	19.0	*100*
Egypt	-	9.1	4.3	20.7	-	34.1	9.8	22.0	*100*
Sub - Saharan Africa	-	16.5	3.8	28.2	0.4	20.7	13.5	16.9	*100*
Senegal	-	12.9	3.8	33.3	-	22.0	5.3	22.7	*100*
Latin America	14.8	13.3	14.1	4.7	5.5	11.7	28.9	7.0	*100*
Peru	23.5	2.0	23.5	3.9	2.0	7.8	21.6	15.7	*100*
Ecuador	10.9	21.7	4.3	2.2	10.9	15.2	34.8	-	*100*
Total	*3.0*	*21.5*	*8.2*	*17.5*	*1.0*	*24.9*	*12.4*	*11.6*	*100*
Women									
Eastern Europe - UE	6.5	30.0	21.3	9.1	0.9	12.6	19.6	-	*100*
Romania	7.1	31.1	21.2	9.0	0.9	11.8	18.9	-	*100*
Eastern Europe – no UE	3.9	23.1	9.8	24.6	1.5	25.8	10.3	1.0	*100*
Albania	1.8	32.9	9.6	3.2	2.3	40.2	9.6	0.5	*100*
Ukraine	7.1	6.1	9.1	60.6	-	4.0	10.1	3.0	*100*
Asia	1.1	20.7	10.0	13.3	5.4	31.5	16.1	2.0	*100*
Chine	-	22.1	10.6	22.1	3.8	13.5	27.9	-	*100*
India	-	26.9	8.3	0.9	3.7	55.6	3.7	0.9	*100*
Philippines	2.0	14.1	6.1	33.3	7.1	7.1	26.3	4.0	*100*
North Africa	0.9	16.0	4.9	3.3	4.9	57.7	10.0	2.3	*100*
Morocco	0.8	16.5	3.8	3.4	6.9	52.1	14.2	2.3	*100*
Egypt	0.9	14.8	4.6	2.8	0.9	67.6	4.6	3.7	*100*
Sub - Saharan Africa	1.2	18.1	6.4	5.8	1.8	39.8	23.4	3.5	*100*
Senegal	-	18.9	1.9	9.4	-	49.1	18.9	1.9	*100*
Latin America	11.6	12.8	17.7	13.4	6.1	7.3	28.7	2.4	*100*
Peru	19.3	17.5	7.0	19.3	8.8	10.5	15.8	1.8	*100*
*Ecuador**	9.3	16.7	22.2	1.9	5.6	3.7	35.2	5.6	*100*
Total	*3.3*	*20.4*	*10.5*	*12.2*	*3.6*	*32.6*	*15.6*	*1.8*	*100*

* n>50

In the second transition, the median interviewees' age at family reunification in Italy is 34.8 for men and 26.6 for women. In other words, men spent on average 6.2 years after his migration to get a family re-unification while women spent 4.2 years to do the same. There are many differences according to the origin macro-area of immigrants. In particular, the gap for women is evident among Africans, while East-Europeans assume the opposite picture (the mean duration of re-unification after migration is respectively 3.0 for men and 3.7 for women).

Fig. 1 – Cumulative survival functions of transition to present union by age and birth cohort. Actuarial method.

Source: our elaborations on ORIM data.

In the end, the transition to union in Italy among singles at migration shows an older mean age than general picture in transition one (respectively 28.8 for women and 33.2 for men).

In order to identify the main determinants of the previous transitions, we run three set of discrete time logit models. Both time-varying and time-fixed covariates are considered. Our analysis focus, in particular, on the comparison of origin countries separately for men and women.

In adding to sex, birth cohort and origin country, preliminary results show the significant effect of the length of stay in Italy and age at arrival, as well as the interviewees' educational attainment and pre-marital birth.

References

Blangiardo G. C., Migliorati S., Terzera L. (2004) Center Sampling: from Applicative Issues to Methodological Aspects, in SIS, *Atti della XLII Riunione Scientifica*, Cleup, Padova.

Bonomi P., Terzera L. (2003) Fare famiglia. Strutture familiari degli stranieri presenti in Lombardia, in Natale, M., Moretti, E. (eds.), *Siamo pochi o siamo troppi? Alcuni aspetti delle relazioni tra evoluzione demografica e sviluppo economico e sociale*, FrancoAngeli, Milano.

Boyle P., Halfacree, K., Robinson, V. (1998) *Exploring contemporary migration*, Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., New York.

Cortina C., Esteve A., Domingo A. (2008) Marriage patterns of foreign born population in a new country of immigration: the case of Spain, *International Migration Review*, 42(4).

Gabrielli G., Paterno A., Strozza S. (2007) The Dynamics of Immigrants' Life History: an Application to the Insertion of Albanian and Moroccan Immigrants into Some Italian Areas, *Population Review*, 46(1).

Hill L.E. (2004) Connections between U.S. Female Migration and Family Formation and Dissolution, Migraciones Internacionales, 2(3).

Kulu H., Milewski N. (2007) Family change and migration in the life course: An introduction, *Demographic Research*, 17.

Stark O. (1988) On Marriage and Migration, *European Journal of Population*, 4.

Terzera L. (2006) Famiglia e fecondità, in Paterno A., Strozza S., Terzera L. (eds.), *Sospesi tra due rive. Migrazioni e insediamenti di albanesi e marocchini*, Franco Angeli, Milano.

Terzera L., Gabrielli G., Strozza S. (2011) Paterno A., *Family Formation and Migration Histories: Life Courses and Determinants,* paper presented at the "Giornate di Studio sulla Popolazione" of the Associazione Italiana per lo Studio della Popolazione (AISP), Politecnic University of Marches, Ancona (Italy), 2-4 feb.