Female immigration and fertility behavior

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Extended abstract

Aims

This study has two objectives: first, to give a view of the demographic characteristics of immigrants in Italy, with particular attention to the females; second, to analyze the different fertility contexts and typologies of immigrant mothers. The paper wants to emphasize the socio demographic characteristics that differentiate migrant and native-born mothers with a special attention to the parity, the life cycle and the economic status.

Background

In accordance with the last estimations, the Italian Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in 2006 was about 1.35 children per woman (Istat 2006); but if we consider separately the Italian and the foreign women, we find different values: respectively 1.24 and 2.41 in 2005 (Istat 2007c). The foreign Total Fertility Rate is almost the double of the Italian one and the variability between different citizenship people is high. The births by both foreign parents are more then 10% of the total Italian births; this value is important for two reasons: first, this could be a help for the low fertility in this country; second, this increases the amount of the second generation and represents stabilization for foreign people. The second generation today represents 13,5% of total foreign resident population: the 33,7% of the couple with both foreign parents come from central-oriental Europe, the 24,9% from the northern Africa and the 10,5% from East Asia (Istat, 2007d).

In the last years the female population proportion increased up to balance the male one, but not in a uniform way: for instance between Africans the male proportion is majority, but it is not so for the east Europe and the south America groups. The continuous increasing of the number of family residence permit is an useful information to study the link between migration and fertility in Italy: this is true especially for females for whom this permits represent the 48% of the cases, but they also increase for the males that follow their women.

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The mean age of immigrants is 30.8 years, while it is 43.3 for native Italians. About half of the foreigners are between 18 and 39 years old; 22% of them are underage. The most important consequence of immigration is the increase in the working age group (Istat, 2007a), but we have to consider that this age group is also included in the fertility period. In the last year the number of the marriage of mix couple increased, they are, in 2006, the 9,6% of the total; generally they are represented from an Italian man and a foreign wife. (Istat, 2007d).

Data & methods

Data related to the residence permits are gathered from the Ministry of the Interior and diffused from ISTAT (National Statistical Institute). The number of births and the information about the mothers are found in the Population Registers, through the P4 Model introduced from ISTAT, that releases these data. The both are available in the website www.demo.istat.it. We also examine the Birth Sample Survey conducted in 2005; the dataset is extracted from Population Registers between the births of 2003 and represents about 10 per cent of the total resident births registered in that period. The mothers were interviewed through C.A.T.I. technique (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview). We have to put particular care to process these data because not all the information is valid for the foreign population, for instance the one about citizenship.

After an exploratory and descriptive view, the aim of this study is to perform a multivariate analysis (factor and cluster analysis) to individualize the typologies of the foreign mothers referring to their socio demographic behaviours. That is we want to use these multivariate techniques to organize the sample in homogeneous groups using the variables and the indicators that, following our hypothesis, most represent the context of reproduction.

Hypothesis & Research question

The starting point for our hypothesis is that the marital status influence the reproductive behaviour (Milewsky 2006) in the same way for each woman in the country (Mulder and Wagner 1993); for the education and the economic status the idea is that they have different effects between native and foreign (Michielin 2004, Mussino and Van Raalte 2007). We assume that the parity, the propensity to have more children and the mean age at the childbearing describe the difference between the two sub groups; while the

duration of the stay (Ng and Nault 1997, Andersson 2001), the nationality of the partner and the region of arrive discriminate the different immigrant group.

The main questions are if the demographic indicators can help us to establish the fertility model of immigrants in Italy and if the sample survey can help us to solve the problem or explain better the pattern.

Results

Using the factor analysis the variable space can be summarize with five dimensions. Four of these are linked with the family and one with the labour market. By these new indicators the individuals can be represented in the space and summarized in six groups.

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