Between Origin and Destination (BOnD) - Value Acculturation and SocioEconomic Integration of Migrant Women

This project aims to analyze the **acculturation** processes of people of foreign origin in **Lombardy** and to understand the role of **values** and **attitudes** in shaping the **socioeconomic outcomes of migrant women**. The focus will be on three main aspects:

1- **Cultural assimilation** - whether, how, and for which groups the value patterns of people with a foreign background become similar to those of natives when moving from the first to the second generation.
2- **The role of culture in shaping actual behavior** - whether individual values shape women's integration outcomes beyond practical constraints and normative expectations.
3- **The role of context**, which can shape both the strength and speed of assimilation processes and the relation between value patterns and socioeconomic integration.

Focusing on the acculturation processes of people of foreign origin is crucial in light of the massive inflows of people of foreign origin in the last 30 years and the corresponding increase of people of the second generation. In addition to the topic per se, such an approach is interesting because cultural values and attitudes, especially when it comes to gender equality, potentially shape both the intentions and the actual tendency of migrant women to participate in the social and cultural life of the destination country in general, and its labor market in particular. To tackle this issue comprehensively, these processes must be viewed as embedded in a context that strongly shapes the cultural patterns of natives - and therefore the assimilation "pressure" - and the potential integration outcomes of migrants through different sets of opportunities and constraints.

To study this, these main choices are made:

(1) The project will be conducted in **Lombardy**, which is extremely rich in terms of the presence of people of foreign origin (1.1 out of 5 million of people of foreign origin living in Italy are in Lombardy), their diversity (33 national groups exist counting at least 5,000 residents), and also contextual heterogeneity (with both very big and modern cities and mountain/inner areas).

(2) When it comes to **acculturation processes**, three main areas will be investigated: attitudes towards gender roles, attitudes towards diversity, and moral values (such as those concerning homosexuality, abortion, suicide, etc.). Given the leading role of socialization in shaping values, the main focus will be on **generational differences**. This refers to differences between the first and second generations of immigrants and between them and the native majority.

(3) Concerning **socioeconomic outcomes** instead, the focus will be on labour force participation, access to higher education, and frequency and quality of contact with natives.

(4) An **original survey** will be developed to study and compare native and migrant populations both in terms of values and attitudes, as well as integration outcomes. It will be supplemented with data on cultural legacies and normative expectations from the origin countries derived from existing survey programs such as the World Values Survey. To build the questionnaire, two **focus groups** will be held with key informants.

(5) A partnership has been created to bring together expertise in the quantitative study of cultural patterns (**UNIMI**-spsTREND group), ethnic penalties, and migrants' integration outcomes (UNIMI, **UNIBO**), as well as on surveys on migrant populations (**ISMU**, UNIBO, UNIMI). Furthermore, members of the GESI team will provide unique expertise on contextual and geographical differences,

and the involvement of the ISMU press office is a major advantage when it comes to communicating the results of the project.
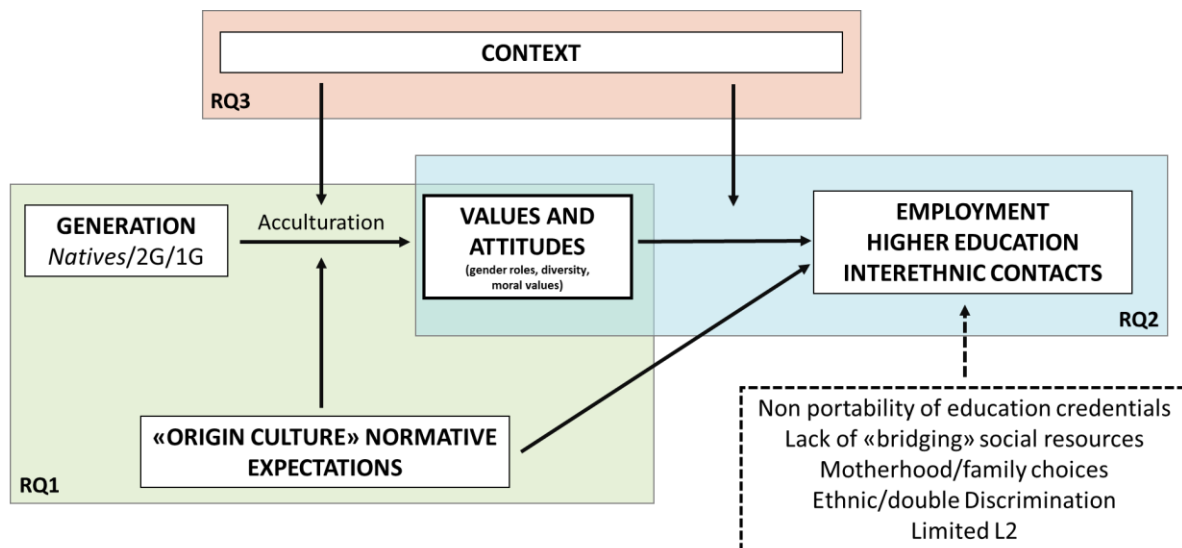
(6) Concerning **outreach** and **impact**, the contribution of the project is twofold. On the academic side, it will provide novel evidence on a topic that has been scarcely investigated, by providing an innovative set of data that will be released for free by the end of the project. Such evidence will also be very useful in planning and calibrating intervention policies that often overlook the role of individual values in shaping economic and social integration, especially of migrant women.

(7) To **disseminate** the main findings of the project to the **academic audience**, conference presentations will be organized, and journal articles will be submitted. In addition, the full dataset will be made accessible for free before the end of the project. Such dataset will be provided in advance to young researchers who seek to present novel analyses in the series of seminars organized in the framework of the project.

(8) To **communicate** the insights of the project to the **wider public**, a report and a popular science paper will be written, including a series of infographics. In addition, a policy brief will be discussed with relevant stakeholders, and the main steps of the project will be published on a public webpage and presented at a final conference. This conference will also provide an opportunity to promote the release of the data.

The main focus of the project is on **migrants' acculturation processes** and the role of values and attitudes, especially concerning gender roles, in shaping socioeconomic outcomes such as **women's participation in the labor market, access to higher education**, and frequency and quality of **interethnic contacts**. This is important to determine if there are cultural barriers (or incentives) that exist beyond practical constraints, family choices, and normative expectations, as it is key when planning, targeting, and promoting integration policies. Given the geographical configuration of the region of interest, Lombardy, particular attention will also be devoted to the **role of context**, defined in terms of urban poles, central and marginal areas. In this framework, contextual characteristics are intended to impact both acculturation processes and the role of values in shaping socioeconomic outcomes.

The entire theoretical framework of the project is articulated into three main research questions which account for the three main theoretical nodes just mentioned. They are summarized in the following scheme and then described more in detail:

CONTEXT

RQ3

GENERATION
Natives/2G/1G

Acculturation

VALUES AND ATTITUDES
(gender roles, diversity, moral values)

EMPLOYMENT HIGHER EDUCATION INTERETHNIC CONTACTS

RQ2

«ORIGIN CULTURE» NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS

RQ1

Non portability of education credentials
Lack of «bridging» social resources
Motherhood/family choices
Ethnic/double Discrimination
Limited L2

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: *To what extent do migrants tend to become similar to the native population on a set of values and attitudes (gender roles, diversity, moral values) when moving from the first to the second generation?*

This first research question directly addresses the issue of acculturation processes and develops from the assumption that the context of socialization mainly matters for the formation of cultural patterns of values and attitudes. Thus, the focus is on generational differences. Furthermore, by taking advantage of already existing available data, the research will also investigate whether and how normative expectations (cultural patterns inherited from the origin country) shape such processes of acculturation, and for which groups. Three main sets of values will be studied: firstly, those regarding gender roles, as they are clearly linked to women's integration outcomes. Secondly, those concerning attitudes towards diversity (minorities in general and gender minorities in particular, other ethnic groups). Lastly, general moral values, such as acceptance of homosexuality, abortion, divorce, etc.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: *To what extent do migrants' values and attitudes in terms of gender roles, attitudes toward diversity, and moral values impact socioeconomic outcomes beyond practical constraints, family choices, and normative expectations?*

This second research question complements the vast body of research on the lack of migrant integration in the labor market and in the education system, with a particular focus on women's performance. As shown in the dashed box in the scheme, evidence exists that the so-called ethnic penalty exists due to various factors, ranging from low portability of educational credentials to general discrimination by natives. This project adds to this knowledge by examining the role of culture in widening or even closing such a gap. Socioeconomic outcomes are understood here as women's participation in the labor market, access to higher education, and frequency and quality of interethnic contacts. As we will see in more detail, the last outcome is a significant dimension for acculturation processes and thus requires careful examination. Normative expectations from the country-of-origin culture are intended to have a direct impact on such socioeconomic outcomes, beyond individual values. The research design of this project also allows for the evaluation of this issue.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3: *What is the role of the context in shaping both acculturation processes and the effect of culture for socioeconomic outcomes?*

The context in which interethnic contacts occur has the potential to shape both acculturation processes and the role of cultural patterns in integration. With regard to acculturation, this occurs because the tendency to become similar to a certain group is strongly influenced by the characteristics of that group, in this case, the Italian natives. Evidence shows that cultural patterns differ geographically, even within a single region, and therefore the need to account for these differences. Regarding socioeconomic outcomes, different contexts are characterized by different sets of constraints and opportunities, and therefore need to be considered as well. In evaluating the characteristics of the context, this project goes beyond the classic urban/rural divide in favor of the distinction between central and marginal areas, which is more suitable for the theoretical aims of the project and also for a general assessment of geographical differences (Barca, Casavola, and Lucatelli 2014).

Scientific impact: *BOnD provides important empirical evidence for analyzing gendered and generational ethnic inequalities in the acculturation process*

The project has a key added value that boosts its academic impact which is the original survey developed to analyze through a comparative approach native and migrant populations in terms of values, attitudes and integration outcomes. These unique data will be supplemented with data on cultural legacies and normative expectations from the origin countries derived from existing survey programs such as the World Values Survey allowing for a home-host country perspective which is usually lacking in migration studies. While there is vast empirical evidence on migrants' integration both in the educational system and in the labour market, there is however a dearth of research regarding values, attitudes and normative expectations that might boost or prevent such integration differently for different ethnic groups.

The project provides robust empirical evidence on migrants' acculturation processes applying the **double lens of gender and generation**, in order to unpack *(a)* the mechanisms of acculturation across gender and generations in terms of similarity between natives and migrants regarding attitudes (gender roles, diversity, moral values); *(b)* how these attitudes shape migrants' socioeconomic integration by having a boosting effect of disadvantages accumulation or a compensatory effect by easing their integration; *(c)* the effect of geographical differences regarding central and marginal areas in intensifying or shrinking the native-migrant gaps in terms of socio-economic integration. In doing so the project aims at highlighting specific mechanisms of inequalities related to gender, generation and ethnicity and the key role of the culture in shaping life-choices and socioeconomic outcomes, outlining conditions and groups potentially at higher risk of marginality to be addressed by integration policies.

In particular, can be mentioned the vulnerability of:
b) migrant women, who face higher risks of social isolation, poverty, discrimination and penalty in the labour market, bearing the double burden of being women and being migrant;
c) second generation: the project analyses, for the first time in the Italian context, the role of values and attitudes in their cultural and socioeconomic integration and unpack penalization factors that should be addressed by policy makers.

So far there are no Italian data that allow comparisons between natives and migrants on a wide range of values, attitudes, and economic outcomes. BOnD project will fill this important data gap and add new and groundbreaking knowledge about the role of culture as a boosting or compensating mechanisms of natives-migrants' vulnerabilities and well-being in different regional contexts. In doing this, a further methodological value is that regarding the implementation and the testing of **specific survey instruments** that have been developed so far with reference only to the native populations (especially those regarding values and attitudes, see the debate about **measurement**

equivalence). The project will have a strong impact on the academic community as **the data** - that are comparable with other international data at both the EU level and at different immigrants' countries of origin level - **will be freely available** for any researchers who want to carry out research on the many topics included in the BOnD survey boosting knowledge advancement on migrants' integration.

Job description

The successful candidate will join the BOnD project, participate fully in the research life of the research team and engage in advanced independent research within the remit of the project. More specifically, the appointed researcher will carry out the following research activities:
- Contribute actively to the research of the BOnD project;
- Analyse data produced in the framework of the project and other data related to the project's aims
- Prepare scientific articles to be discussed and presented during both scheduled BOnD meetings and scientific events involving external experts, and submitted to international peer-reviewed and high-impact journals for publication.
- Undertake appropriate organizational duties within the group when required such as organizing research meetings, workshops, seminars, and conference sessions.

Skills, qualifications, and requirements
- Proven competence in demography/sociology and statistics/econometrics; experience with relevant statistical packages e.g., STATA
- Extensive empirical research experience in quantitative social sciences, preferably in the area of migration studies.
- Experience with data processing and handling of datasets at the micro and macro level.
- Track record in research and publication output corresponding to the career stage of the successful candidate
- Good command of written and spoken English
- Innovative and critical thinking. Proven independence in conducting research.
- Expertise in the following areas is desirable: migration studies; inequality, gender studies